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The Emergence of Longview, Washington: Indians, Farmers, and Industrialists on the Cowlitz-Columbia Flood Plain

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THE EMERGENCE OF LONGVIEW, WASHINGTON:
INDIANS, FARMERS, AND INDUSTRIALISTS ON
THE COWLITZ-COLUMBIA FLOOD PLAIN

by

Brett H. Rushforth

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

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in

History

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ABSTRACT

The Emergence of Longview, Washington: Indians, Farmers, and Industrialists on the Cowlitz-Columbia Flood Plain

by

Brett Rushforth, Master of Arts
Utah State University, 1998

Major Professor: Dr. Christopher A. Conte
Department: History

This thesis examined the relationships among ecology, economy, and society in the history of Longview, Washington, a planned timber settlement on the Columbia and Cowlitz Rivers. It compared the environmental, economic, and social histories of the Cowlitz Indians, American farmers, and urban industrialists that lived there over the past four hundred years.

The central argument of the thesis is that human society cannot separate its economic and social organization from its ecology, nor can it reorder the environment without restructuring its economic and social institutions. Three different groups lived in the same physical space, but since they conceived and used the land differently, their societies developed distinct social and economic frameworks.
The narrative of the thesis is chronological, tracing environmental, economic, and social change from about 1790 to 1934. During that time, humans gradually transformed a flood plain once dominated by vegetation and wildlife into a paved, sculpted, and densely populated industrial city. This study outlines the major causes and consequences of that transformation for both the land and its inhabitants.

A wide range of source material provided the evidence upon which my conclusions were based. In addition to the more conventional historical sources such as diaries, letters, newspapers, memoirs, maps, and census data, I consulted anthropological studies, geological and geographical surveys, ecological reports, agricultural bulletins, and sociological analyses. My findings are presented in Chapters 2 through 5, with chapter 6 summarizing and drawing final conclusions.
I first wish to thank Charles S. Peterson and the Mountain West Center for Regional Studies for funding a portion of the research that made this thesis possible. I would also like to thank all of the members of my committee for their singular contributions to this study. Dr. Chris Conte proved a demanding and thoughtful critic of my work, who never praised my sloppiness and who stretched my thinking in many ways. His time and attention are greatly appreciated. Dr. Carol O’Connor’s insights on local and urban history led me to many of the sources that shaped my thinking about Longview, and her constant encouragement meant even more than her insights. Dr. Clyde Milner provided excellent context for my study in his American West seminar, and his direction on such topics as the frontier strengthened my thinking about Longview’s historical context. Dr. Joanna Endter-Wada’s insights on Native American natural resource issues and environmental policy in general helped immensely.

I would like to thank all of my professors at Utah State University, especially Dr. David Lewis and Dr. Michael Nichols, whose seminars strengthened both my writing and my ability to evaluate sources. I also appreciate the insights and encouragement of Dr. Dorothee Kocks of the University of Utah, who introduced me to environmental history and encouraged my pursuit of the Longview topic.

Many people in the Longview/Kelso area deserve mention, as well. David Freece, director of the Cowlitz County Historical Museum, provided open access to his archive and insightful comments in the early stages of my research. The staff of the Longview Public Library helped greatly by allowing me special access to the materials in the
Longview Room. I am also indebted to Roy Wilson, whose information about the Cowlitz Indians proved invaluable.

I also thank my parents, Craig and Martha Rushforth, for their financial and moral support throughout my graduate program.

Most importantly, however, I acknowledge my indebtedness to God, who granted me both the faculties and the favorable circumstances that made this experience possible.

Brett Rushforth
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. GENESIS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A NEW PEOPLE, A NEW LAND</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. VIVID DAYDREAMS OF A CITY</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. THE NATURE OF THE CITY</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“To the natural beauties of Longview’s setting its founders added spacious and beautiful parks, wide streets, residential districts of appeal and charm, flowers, shrubs, fine architecture. Longview, today, five years after its founding, is one of the beautiful cities of America. Nature and man united efforts to make it so.”

In the spring of 1928 a small urban planning group called the Longview Company published a booklet describing the newly established city of Longview, Washington. The purpose of the publication was to convince workers and investors that Longview was the most exciting and modern city in the nation, if not the world. Longview was, in the words of its boosters, “A Wonder City in a Wonderland.”

Throughout the book’s thirty-two pages, images of the new city and its natural surroundings joined to entice prospective residents. This collage of more than 150 photographs obscured the distinctions between civic centers and scenic rivers, broad roads and towering mountains. It touted Longview as both a “thriving, progressive city...planned from the ground up,” and a “nature ordained” city whose very location and destiny were prescribed by the land around it.

Although the intent of Longview’s boosters was clearly to increase investment in the new city, their discussion of Longview and its environment was no mere ploy. They

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genuinely believed that Longview and its ecology interacted in vital ways to produce the
city’s goodness, and that a good city and a good environment went hand in hand. Robert
A. Long, the city’s founder, based his vision for Longview on the notion that a city’s
environment, both within and surrounding its municipal limits, largely determined its
success. Yet Long’s definition of success, and his vision for the city’s environment, rested
on his faith in American industrialism and rapid urbanization. Thus, while Long boasted of
his city’s parks and streams, his most cherished landmarks were the factories.4

“A Wonder City in a Wonderland,” The Longview Company’s 1928 promotional
booklet, detailed the ways in which city and nature had interacted in Longview’s five years
of existence. It claimed that humans had cooperated with nature to shape the land into its
destined form, and had in the process created the ideal American city. Yet “A Wonder
City in a Wonderland” ignored the centuries of human settlement that had preceded the
industrial city, and by doing so misapprehended many aspects of Longview’s environment.
It said nothing of the agricultural settlement that preceded Longview’s creation or of how
that society transformed the land and prepared it for the urbanization that would follow.
It neglected nearly three hundred years of Indian settlement and interaction with the
environment. Moreover, it uncritically accepted the transcendence of American urban
industrialism and its compatibility with Longview’s ecology. As a promotional tract, the
book succeeded. As an accurate reflection of Longview’s environment, it failed.

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 “Longview To Be One of Six Big Cities of West,” Longview Daily News, 13 July 1923.
In linking urban/industrial landscapes to their pre-urban conditions, environmental historians have done little better than Robert A. Long. As a historical subfield, environmental history is still inchoate. For at least fifteen years, environmental historians have openly debated the direction their discipline should take. The best known of these debates was published in the *Journal of American History* in 1990, and comprises a series of essays by Donald Worster, Alfred Crosby, William Cronon, Richard White, Carolyn Merchant, and Stephen Pyne. Worster's lead article established what has become a commonly accepted definition of environmental history.

Worster argued, as he had in earlier publications, that historians needed to adopt an "agroecological perspective" in their discussion of the past. In other words, he argued for a history that focused on the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature in an agrarian setting. "The most telling history," wrote Worster in an earlier work, "is not to be found in the chronicles of kings, generals, wars, and politics; it is written in the book of nature." Worster wisely noted the importance of food in connecting human populations to their ecosystems, and emphasized the need to study varying modes of production. His

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5 In 1982, the inaugural meeting of the American Society for Environmental History was convened at the University of California, Irvine. There, historians including Donald Worster, John Opie, and Joel Tarr discussed new directions for the infant field of environmental history. For a collection of the papers presented, see Kendall E. Bailes, ed., *Environmental History: Critical Issues in Comparative Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985).


7 Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New
exclusive discussion of “preindustrial conditions,” however, ignored the continued interplay between humanity and nature in industrial and urban settings like Longview. Although urbanites obviously remain connected to ecosystems through the consumption of food, their relationships with the environment are of a different kind than those of people living in agricultural communities.

Worster’s emphasis on non-urban environments both reflected earlier trends and entrenched them. The best-known early works of American environmental history, such as Samuel Hays’s *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* (1959), Roderick Nash’s *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967), Richard White’s *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change* (1979), and William Cronon’s *Changes in the Land* (1983), discuss the transformation of ecosystems from forests to farms, but rarely to factories. This focus established an early trend in the field that steered inquiry away from urban topics.

It is this neglect of urban/industrial history that scholars like Tarr, Rosen, and Melosi raise in their critiques of mainstream environmental histories. “Studies focused on the role of humans in the natural world,” argued Melosi in the *Environmental History*
Review, “rarely confront or encompass the city.” Melosi contended that to neglect the city is to ignore a reality of contemporary life that offers critical insight into human relationships with the environment. Although urban historians and urban geographers frequently discussed space, resource use, and pollution, Melosi demonstrated that very little that could qualify as environmental history of cities has been written. He called for a history of urban environments that includes “physical features and resources of urban sites (and regions)” and how they “influence and are shaped by natural forces, growth, spatial change and development, and human action.” Melosi explicitly blamed Donald Worster for the non-urban bias of current environmental history. Since Worster’s definition of nature excluded the city, he argued, it denied “the powerful holistic quality of environmental history which demands inclusion more than exclusion.”

Even before Melosi’s critique, however, serious research on urban environmental history was well underway. William Cronon’s 1991 study of Chicago, for example, addressed the environmental history of one of the nation’s most important urban centers. *Nature’s Metropolis* brilliantly demonstrated the ability of environmental history as a discipline to reveal important aspects of urban history by detailing the role that urbanization and industrialization played in the transformation of Chicago’s agrarian hinterlands. He argued convincingly that discussing transformed agricultural lands, as

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12Melosi, “The Place of the City,” 2-7.
13Melosi, “The Place of the City,” 4. For another critique of Worster’s anti-urban bias, see Joel Tarr and Christine Rosen, “The Importance of an Urban Perspective in Environmental History,” *Journal of Urban History* 20 (May 1994): 299-310. Richard White suggests that a very early anti-urban bias developed in environmental history partly because the seminal works of the discipline, namely *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* and *Wilderness and the American Mind*, happened to discuss
Worster espouses, is impossible without considering the pressures of cities and factories on those regions. Anticipating Melosi’s argument, Cronon concluded that “to miss the city’s relation to nature and the country is in fact to miss much of what the city is...The city is part of nature.”

If Melosi overstated the absence of urban environmental history, his article still accomplished its purpose. Following the article’s publication, urban environmental histories began appearing with increasing rapidity. Yet most of these studies suffer from too narrow an urban scope, addressing garbage, pollution, and environmental justice without considering environmental connections that run far beyond the city both in space and time. Instead of blending the agrarian and urban elements of America’s environmental history, as Cronon did in *Nature’s Metropolis*, many scholars have merely shifted focus from agrarian to urban topics. With this approach, true understanding of a city’s environmental history will suffer from the same deficiencies demonstrated by The Longview Company in their promotional literature. By focusing exclusively on forests and wilderness instead of towns and cities. See Richard White, “American Environmental History: The Development of a New Historical Field,” *Pacific Historical Review* 54 (Fall 1985): 300.


One notable exception is Richard White’s *The Organic Machine*. Although White traces the history of the Columbia River, clearly a non-urban topic, he details the effects of urban development on the life of the river. He argues that “if we want to understand what we have done and how we have acted in nature, we might want to spend more time thinking about Ralph Waldo Emerson and Lewis Mumford.
Longview's urban conditions, the city's boosters were able to ignore many important questions about the sustainability and morality of their industrial enterprise. Similarly, if we continue writing urban environmental histories that disregard agriculture, hunting, and gathering, we could miss many of our past's most important insights.\(^{17}\)

This study blends the agrarian and urban elements of Longview, Washington's environmental history. Before the incorporation of Longview, the plain on which it was built was an agricultural community that had previously been a Native American gathering place. Worster's focus on food production and agricultural transformation offers a model with which to evaluate the early years of Longview's history. Melosi's and Cronon's emphasis on the city offer solid groundwork on which to build a study of Longview's later years. Thus, the environmental history of Longview spans the deep ideological and historiographical divide found between studies of rural and urban ecologies. The most effective means to this end can be found in the growing literature on the study of place.\(^{18}\)

The most recent and forceful advocate of studying environmental history from the perspective of place has been Dan Flores. "The narrative line [of environmental history]," he contended in the *Environmental History Review*, "...should be the story of different but sequential cultures occupying the same space, and creating their own succession of

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places.” With the emphasis on the place itself—rather than a particular conception or use of the place—historians can create a unified study of a single location even if it has supported markedly different human populations.

This strategy is actually not too different from the original intentions of White’s, Cronon’s, Worster’s, and others’ early works of environmental history. Their task was to demonstrate how a place changed over time and how those changes reflected and affected the people living there. Partly because the emphasis was on “nature,” however, the story rarely extended beyond the presumed annihilation of nature. And since the city was defined as a human, and therefore an “unnatural,” creation, it was not considered the proper place to study environmental history. With place rather than nature as the focal point, stories like Longview’s can be told as a single environmental history without wrangling over the meaning of the word “nature” at all. For, as Cronon shrewdly noted in *Nature’s Metropolis*, “the boundary between human and nonhuman, natural and unnatural, is profoundly problematic.”

This study is organized around the three human societies that occupied the western plain at the confluence of the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers in southwestern Washington: the Cowlitz Indians, nineteenth century American farmers, and twentieth century industrialists. The narrative is chronological, tracing environmental, economic, and social change from about 1790 to 1934. During that time, humans gradually transformed a flood plain once dominated by vegetation and wildlife into a paved, sculpted, and densely

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populated industrial city. This study outlines the major causes and consequences of that transformation for both the land and its inhabitants.

This study employs a wide range of source material. In addition to the more conventional historical sources such as diaries, letters, newspapers, memoirs, maps, and census data, I consulted anthropological studies, geological and geographical surveys, ecological reports, agricultural bulletins, and sociological analyses. My findings are presented in Chapters 2 through 5, with Chapter 6 summarizing and drawing final conclusions.

Chapter 2 discusses the Cowlitz Indians' environmental, economic, and social organization at the time of white contact in the early 1790s. It details the tribe's subsistence patterns and discusses the implications of their migratory lifestyle on the ecological and social viability of their society. It argues that although the Cowlitz Indians' migrations minimized their ecological impact on the flood plain, constant movement increased child mortality and encouraged the practice of slavery. With the arrival of white explorers and settlers, migration also spread disease faster and farther, exacerbating the tragedy of at least three nineteenth century epidemics.

Chapter 3 analyzes the demise of the Cowlitz Indians, which occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the settlement of the plain by newly-arrived American farmers. When British explorers arrived at the Cowlitz River in 1792, there is no evidence of conflict with the Cowlitz Indians. Rather, the Cowlitz did what they had always done by attempting to turn immigration to their economic and political advantage. Within forty years, however, disease began to destroy Cowlitz Indians by the hundreds, then thousands.
When American settlers arrived at the plain in the late 1840s, only a fraction of the Cowlitz remained. The chapter makes two primary arguments. First, it contends that Cowlitz environmental and economic practices facilitated the spread of the diseases that destroyed them. Second, it claims that American farmers established an unsustainable subsistence pattern by intensively farming the flood plain to the exclusion of alternative means of survival such as hunting, fishing, and logging.

After about seventy years of settlement, in the early 1920s, the farmers began looking for a way out. Their crops were too small to sustain their increased numbers, and their children were turning elsewhere for employment. Chapter 4 discusses the plan of a wealthy midwestern timber executive, Robert A. Long, to purchase the flood plain for the construction of a new lumber settlement. It argues that what Long called the plain’s “natural advantages” for a city were mostly human-created features such as cleared brush, railroad tracks, and commercial connections. The chapter also discusses Long’s conception of the environment and how that influenced his plans for the new metropolis.

Chapter 5 contemplates Longview’s physical creation. It explains the interplay among environmental, economic, and social organization in the new city, emphasizing the difficulty of distinguishing the three. Robert A. Long was animated by his belief, as expressed in “A Wonder City in a Wonderland,” that the region’s environment provided the perfect location for urban development. Long correctly predicted that the city’s physical environment would strongly influence its social and economic composition. Another of his predictions, however, was far less accurate. “Within twenty-five years or less,” he boasted at Longview’s dedication in 1923, “this place called Longview is going
to be one of the five outstanding cities of the United States. It did not happen. The Cowlitz Indians failed to maintain equitable labor, and Monticello's farmers failed to sustain a diverse ecology, but Longview failed at both. The reasons for this disappointment underscore this study's central argument: that Longview's environmental, economic, and social histories are inseparable.

21"Longview To Be One of Six Big Cities of West," Longview Daily News, 13 July 1923.
CHAPTER 2

GENESIS

“Once upon a time all the animals and birds were people.”
—Henry Cheholts, Cowlitz Indian, 1927

The story of Longview, Washington, begins, like any history of place, with magma. The land on which Longview was erected arose more than fifteen million years ago from the forces of rock, water, heat, and cold. Longview lies at the southernmost tip of what is known to geographers and geologists as the Puget Trough, the span of land bordered by the Olympic Peninsula on the west, the Cascade Mountains on the east, and the Columbia River on the south. Over centuries, the Cowlitz River carved its way southwest to the Columbia River from a glacier on Mount Rainier. At the confluence of the two rivers lay the large, relatively flat flood plain that would become Longview, Washington.

That plain was the final repository for much of the debris carried by the Cowlitz River. The Cowlitz drains about 2,500 square miles of land, mostly from the western slopes of the Cascade Mountains. Draining Mount Rainier and Mount St. Helens, both

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historically active volcanoes, the Cowlitz brought massive flows of mud and gravel to its flood plain, but it also deposited large quantities of organic material that had been carried there by the force of volcanic eruptions. The soils along the river, and particularly at its mouth on the Columbia, were therefore both fertile and well drained. These depositions eventually created a large, fan-shaped flatland extending north and west from the river’s mouth to meet the rolling hills that ran west from the river upstream.24

What emerged was a soggy plain marbled with sloughs, marshes, and streams. One nineteenth-century traveler, Peter Crawford, attempted to explore the plain in a small canoe. “[We] traversed its circuitous sinuosities,” he wrote, “winding here and there until we took off one way, one took off another way, spreading in every direction.” There were so many fingers leading in so many directions, however, that Crawford gave up his search and climbed a hill to survey the land, instead.25

With an average annual precipitation of forty-three inches, the plain produced verdant and dense vegetation. Along the banks of its rivers, streams, and sloughs arose water-loving trees like cottonwood, alder, willow, and ash. In a dense bramble of undergrowth grew vine maple and salal, which often erected an impassable barrier to humans wishing to reach the waters.26 Where there were no streams (further inland from

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the Cowlitz and Columbia rivers), oak, red maple, cedar, and fir grew on what would become the plain’s most suitable farmland.

Since most of the plain’s bountiful rainfall occurs between December and March, the land also experienced annual flooding as the streams and sloughs swelled to accommodate the influx of water. Though less frequently than the plain’s smaller water sources, the Cowlitz and Columbia rivers flooded the area with some regularity.²⁷

For millennia the rich vegetation and ample water supply at the Cowlitz-Columbia intersection drew deer and elk to the plain, most of whom lived more permanently on the surrounding hillsides. Predators, most commonly timber wolves, would follow the deer from the hills. The rivers teemed with life. Spawning salmon and smelt surged up the rivers in such quantity that they blackened the waters. They were followed by seals, who ate slow and straggling fish. When the waters were full of salmon, black bears would descend from the hills to feed on easy prey. When there were no salmon in the river, and no bears on its lower banks, the river hosted eel, trout, steelhead, chub, and bullhead.²⁸

The land was abundant with life, offering generous biological resources to the people who began to settle it about three hundred years ago. The first known group to occupy the land at the confluence of the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers were the Cowlitz Indians. A Salish tribe with linguistic connections to much of the coastal population in

Washington and British Columbia, the Cowlitz nevertheless were more socially connected with the region’s interior tribes near the Columbia Plateau. Members of the tribe in the upper Cowlitz basin were known as Taidnapam, or Upper Cowlitz peoples. Through intermarriage and seasonal contact with the Columbia Plateau tribes, the Taidnapam adopted a Sahaptin dialect, linking them, and by extension the Lower Cowlitz, more closely with Washington’s interior tribes, most particularly the Yakima.29

Although they lived in the Pacific Northwest far longer, the Cowlitz Indians probably arrived at the present-day site of Longview as recently as the 1650s.30 The land served for two centuries as a winter home for the Cowlitz, who moved eastward with the arrival of spring each year to gather food, barter for goods, and reaffirm family relationships with their upper Cowlitz relatives. At the intersection of the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers, the tribe built cedar homes with wood taken from the surrounding hillsides. These homes, left empty for more than half of the year, housed several families each. It was there that they stored, prepared, and ate their winter food.31

The diversity and nutritional balance of the Cowlitz Indian diet demonstrates the tribe’s intimate understanding of their land. The most important staple early in the winter was the preserved portion of their fall Chinook salmon catch, which would be smoked and stored in cedar bark baskets. This provided the protein necessary to augment the plentiful

30 House Committee on Indian Affairs, Cowlitz Tribe of Indians of Washington, by Charles E. McChesney, 64th Cong., 1st sess., 1916, Report No. 829, 5; Darlene Fitzpatrick, We Are Cowlitz: Traditional and Emergent Ethnicity, Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, Seattle, 1979. The issue of how long the Cowlitz have lived at the mouth of the Cowlitz River is politically charged and therefore a matter of intense contention. Neither documents nor oral histories support the Cowlitz’s arrival earlier than the seventeenth century.
supply of dried berries and roots. The gooseberry, for instance, gathered in the spring from upriver prairies, was a fine source of carbohydrates, calcium, magnesium, and vitamin C.\textsuperscript{32} Blackcap, blackberries, wild strawberries, blue huckleberries, red elderberries, and Indian plums were also gathered in spring and summer, dried by sun or by fire and stored in baskets for winter use.\textsuperscript{33} The Cowlitz then boiled them as needed in the winter months. More substantial was camas, the most highly valued plant among the natives of western Washington. Gathered from clearings in the dense hemlock and fir forests, or traded from another tribe for salmon or tools, camas provided an essential starchy element to the Cowlitz diet. Found year round in the forest undergrowth, wood fern and bracken fern augmented the Cowlitz’s carbohydrate intake. Buried hazelnuts and blackberry tea completed the early winter fare.\textsuperscript{34}

Late in winter, the Cowlitz River would fill with smelt, tiny anadromous fish that swam upriver to spawn. Called \textit{eulachon} by the Cowlitz, smelt were revered as a harbinger of spring.\textsuperscript{35} The Cowlitz caught the fish by dipping them from the river with nets fashioned of pliant willows and attached to long maple poles, swooping the net against the river’s current to catch the fish from behind.\textsuperscript{36} Smelt were always smoked and

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{33}Gunther, \textit{Ethnobotany}, 35-47. The Cowlitz apparently used primarily cottonwood for their fires, because, according to Cowlitz oral accounts, they thought evergreens popped and crackled too much. See Adamson, \textit{Folk Tales}, 243-45.  
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., 14, 24-27, 36.  
eaten whole, only the tail being discarded, to maximize their nutritional yield.\textsuperscript{37} Thousands of pounds of the fish were impaled on long sticks in smoke houses to preserve them for up to three years of future winters.\textsuperscript{38}

This done, the Cowlitz prepared for movement. Some of the earliest spring vegetation utilized by the tribe were shoots from the area’s scouring rushes, whose tops were dried and mixed with salmon eggs deposited during spring spawning runs. Spring and summer brought abundant fresh food, which was eaten by the Cowlitz as they moved eastward to gather with their relatives near the Cascade Mountains. Salmon, horsetail roots, Oregon grapes, crab apples, waterleaf, and thimbleberries, in addition to the berries and plants mentioned before, enriched the Cowlitz diet with a wide range of nutrients.\textsuperscript{39} It also tied them intimately to the areas east of their winter homes where they extracted resources necessary for survival.

When the Cowlitz Indians left the plain each year, it was ecologically a little different than the year before. Although the Cowlitz demonstrated great skill in their relationship with the natural world, theirs was not an environment unaltered by human actions. Nor did Cowlitz ideology or spirituality forbid substantial control of the land.

The Cowlitz Indians viewed themselves as an integral element of the natural world in which they lived. Animals, birds, and fish were all related to the tribe, they believed, through a literal ancestral connection. One of the most oft-repeated Cowlitz stories tells of the initial creation of distinct species on earth. There was a time, according to the

\textsuperscript{37}Adamson, \textit{Folk Tales}, 190.
legend, that all animals on earth could change form from one species to another at will. A
bear, for instance, could become a human one day and a fish the next. The constant
change was creating a great deal of confusion, and the metamorphic powers were being
misused for selfish purposes. To restore order, their god demanded that every creature
decide what form it would take and remain that way forever. From a common group of
creatures, then, arose the entire array of animals, birds, fish, and humans. The Cowlitz
relationship with the animal world was thus taught as a matter of genealogy.\textsuperscript{40}

This belief did not, however, keep the Cowlitz from liberally killing and eating
animals. Cowlitz spirituality included the belief that all non-human animals had agreed to
give their lives to sustain their human counterparts. Salmon, smelt, trout, and a host of
other fish were taken from the rivers with a wide variety of implements that altered the
river environment. Artificial dams of rock, sticks, and mud were fashioned in narrows to
slow the fish and make them vulnerable to capture as they leapt over the obstacle.\textsuperscript{41} More
mobile salmon traps were made of split logs fastened together with hazel rope and used to
slow and divert the fish. Both of these impediments to the river, small as they were, acted
much like beaver dams, swelling the river, damaging riparian vegetation, and trapping
many more species than were intended.\textsuperscript{42}

Once their meals were eaten, the Cowlitz Indians had still not reached the end of
their connection to the land through food. The process by which we gain nutrients from

\textsuperscript{40} Roy Wilson, Official Shaman and Chairman of the Cowlitz Tribe of Indians, interview with
author, 4 November 1995, Bremerton, Washington, tape recording in possession of author. See also
Adamson, \textit{Folk Tales}, 182-193. Regarding similar beliefs among other western tribes, see Richard White,
“Animals and Enterprise,” in \textit{The Oxford History of the American West}, ed. Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A.
\textsuperscript{41} Adamson, \textit{Folk Tales}, 256-57.
our food produces unavoidable by-products that our bodies excrete as waste. For every connection one creates to his or her environment by eating a meal, there is a corresponding connection made by eliminating the unusable portions of that meal.

Cowlitz folk tales are replete with discussions of bodily waste. For example, in Cowlitz mythology Urine Boy was an enforcer of moral norms, and urination was treated in Cowlitz lore as a fundamentally natural phenomenon, inseparable from life with their land and water. Feces were used in Cowlitz rituals as implements of divination and magic, which the tribe employed to mimic the successful hunting practices of their coyote and wolf relatives.

Like every society, the Cowlitz Indians had to find a suitable way to dispose of their sewage, which they exported downstream by depositing it in the Cowlitz River. A fallen tree was placed to hang over the river’s edge where waste would be eliminated, entering unalloyed into the channel used for cooking water, transportation, and bathing. Yet the Cowlitz were not blind to the health risks associated with the consumption of waste-contaminated water. Cautionary tales were repeatedly told to children about the dangers of drinking water downstream from a sewage source. In one tale, a mink drinks water shortly after Xwa’ni, a Cowlitz figure similar to Coyote, has urinated. Mink vomits violently and nearly dies. These stories indicate both the Cowlitz awareness of water pollution issues and their efforts to prevent the sicknesses associated with them.

Cowlitz Indian food gathering did not only alter the river and its borders, but their

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43 Adamson, *Folk Tales*, 226, 256.
44 Ibid., 260-61.
quest for food also encouraged their transformation of the land by fire. Much debate has surrounded the discussion of American Indian uses of fire to alter their environment. The Cowlitz case is no different. Although there is little evidence of widespread fire usage among the Cowlitz, they did burn on the margins of prairies to prevent the encroachment of forests into these most important areas.

Forest fires west of Washington’s Cascade Mountains burned infrequently, but with some regularity. Due to the moist, maritime climate and dense verdure, fires generally occurred only during the driest summers or during periods of extremely hot winds. The fires that did occur in the area traveled by the Cowlitz Indians were generally intense, decimating both understory and large trees. The open areas that resulted grew thick with huckleberry, Oregon grape, and fern and teemed with wildlife. In such prairies, the Cowlitz hunted deer, elk, rabbit, and grouse, both in the spring and in the fall. But without maintenance, these clearings would close in time as the seedlings planted by the fire matured. Though evidence, both climatological and ethnographic, indicates that most of these fires were started by lightning, there was some burning by the Cowlitz to maintain these open spaces as sources of food, both animal and vegetable. Intentional burning on the margins of present-day Longview changed the biological composition of the flood plain to suit Cowlitz needs.


47Ibid.

Yet the limited size of the Cowlitz Indian population that lived on Longview's land meant that these changes were small in scale. Of a total Cowlitz population of 1,000 in 1800, probably less than a fifth had seasonal homes at the confluence of the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers. Furthermore, since the tribe spent about half the year somewhere else, the land was left open during some of the most important months of the growing and reproductive seasons. Whites exploring the Cowlitz River valley found no pristine wilderness, to be sure. Yet bears, wolves, fish, trees, and bushes dominated the landscape rather than evidence of human alteration.

More notable than the ecological changes affected by the Cowlitz Indians were the social consequences of their environmental activities. As the members of the tribe attempted to extract a living from the earth, they established relationships among themselves and with other groups of Indians that profoundly affected the way they lived their lives.

Even for a small group of about two hundred individuals, the Cowlitz-Columbia flood plain did not by itself produce the totality food and shelter needed to sustain life. Its fish, berries, and deer notwithstanding, the Cowlitz Indians never relied on the plain for an entire year's sustenance. They chose instead to gather their livelihood from many lands throughout the Cowlitz River's broad valley.

The most obvious and important strategy adopted by the Cowlitz Indians to secure a living was migration. As mentioned earlier, the group moved from the mouth of the Cowlitz River to the Cascade mountains each year, leaving their permanent homes unoccupied for about six months. Rather than extensively altering the biota of their settlements, they followed blooming plants and migrating animals north and east as the seasons changed to keep themselves supplied with sufficient food and implements. This practice was not forced upon them by their environment, but rather constituted a rational decision by the Cowlitz about how they would organize their society. The fact that other Pacific Northwest Salish tribes under similar environmental conditions chose cultivation instead of migration demonstrates the fact that a choice existed.\textsuperscript{51} The Cowlitz determination to migrate meant that their social organization would be different from that of their coastal relatives.

Migration served first and foremost to connect Cowlitz families with relatives and friends through repeated contact and interaction. As groups would travel upriver, they met with others of their extended family to hunt, fish, and gather produce. These relationships established boundaries, fluid as they may have been, around the Cowlitz as a people. In times of hunger or conflict, families could call on those with whom they had shared the burden of work.\textsuperscript{52}

Cowlitz migrations also developed the tribe’s transportation skills. Due to the dense vegetation and towering forests, rivers were the logical choice for transportation

\textsuperscript{51}See White, \textit{Land Use, Environment, and Social Change}, chapter 1.

through the Cowlitz River valley. Virtually every early record of the Cowlitz River and its natives discusses river travel as the most impressive skill of the Cowlitz tribe. Their unique canoes, called "shovel nosed dugouts" by Lewis and Clark, facilitated maximum mobility, propelled both by oars and long poles.\textsuperscript{53} The Cowlitz was a difficult river to travel, and the work invested by the tribe to master its flow allowed them free travel throughout the valley.

Constant contact with the Cowlitz River also gave it an important place in Cowlitz social and religious sensibilities. For the Cowlitz, the river was sacred. It played a central role in spiritual metaphor through ritual, storytelling, and daily activities. The very name of the river and the tribe refers to the spiritual power of the water. Cowlitz, sometimes rendered "Coweliskee," "Cowelitz," or even "Tawallitch," means "the people who seek (or capture) medicine spirit." \textit{Tamanawas}, or personal medicine spirits, gave Cowlitz youth lifetime power and direction. Near puberty, male and female Cowlitz virgins would be sent to find their \textit{tamanawas}. In preparation for the medicine spirit, they went to the river's edge, usually in a prairie, to seek the river's power. What resulted was the reception of a guardian spirit to accompany them throughout life.\textsuperscript{54}


Cowlitz healing rituals also relied on the power of the river. Medicine people would take the wrinkled rocks from the river’s edge and apply them, heated, as a poultice during the cold and flu season. They were claimed by the Cowlitz to be “good medicine.” They believed the river had imparted metaphysical power to the rock which was transferred to the patient. More concretely, the moist heat from the porous rocks must have been comforting to the ailing individual.\(^{55}\)

Though they considered the river sacred, Cowlitz Indians also admitted that it was capricious and sometimes frightening. Frequently, the first story told in winter gatherings was the tribe’s flood tale. In this story, the Cowlitz River rises and overflows its banks, destroying villages and taking lives in the process. The people are forced to turn into birds and fly away. Another common story was “the person who sucks in.” Also called “the river swallower,” this force of destruction lurked in the depths of the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers, destroying canoes and killing people. Even Xwa’ni, a Cowlitz folk hero, was unable to destroy this “dangerous being.” The only solution came when two brave men were willing to attack the beast with a razor-sharp canoe and break the jam of drift logs in which the beast was hiding.\(^{56}\)

Volcanoes were another manifestation of the river’s unpredictability. Several times during the Cowlitz tribe’s history, they witnessed the destructive flows issuing from Mount St. Helens and Mount Rainier, both active volcanoes drained by the Cowlitz River. Such events were cataclysmic for those living near the river. At times of eruption, the entire ecosystem ceased to function in the anticipated way. Thousands of shattered trees

\(^{55}\)Adamson, *Folk Tales*, 241.
jammed the river, floating over millions of tons of volcanic debris. The banks swelled and flooded violently. A large portion of the fish in the river were destroyed, and wild game fled from the danger of floods or subsequent eruptions, not to return for weeks or even months. Fire filled the sky with thick smoke, and ash filtered down for days. Living near the river at these times was dangerous, and escape was difficult with an unpassable river and dense forests.57

The Cowlitz never deified the land on which they lived or the waters by which they traveled, partly because of their struggle to live successfully with both. One consequence of their choice to make a living by migration was a high infant and youth mortality rate, often associated with the Cowlitz River itself. Although direct data of Cowlitz mortality are not available, several indicators point to a high death rate among Cowlitz infants, especially in their first year of life.58 The tribe eventually developed a ritual whereby mothers could protect their infants from premature death by immersing them in the Cowlitz River. Although no evidence suggests that this practice was successful, it does indicate that a genuine problem existed.59

Even in death the Cowlitz Indians associated themselves with the river. The tribe laid its dead in canoes, raised several feet off the ground by stilts. The most commonly

57In the early 1840's, a minor eruption was recorded by Father Balduc of the Catholic mission. "At three o'clock in the afternoon one of the sides opened and there was an eruption of smoke such as our oldest travelers here have never seen....Since this volcano has broken forth, almost all the fish that are edible have died, which is attributed to the quantity of cinders with which the waters are infected." Quoted in John McClelland, *Cowlitz Corridor*, 12.
documented burial ground was a rock on the Columbia River called “Coffin Rock” or “Mount Coffin.” Explorers and settlers later discovered very old remains on the rock, many of which were those of small children.\textsuperscript{60}

Possibly because the Cowlitz tribe lacked young labor, they relied heavily on trade to complement their own hunting and gathering activities. Little is known about how and what the Cowlitz traded with other Northwest tribes. However, the tribe clearly owned and traded slaves. These slaves were either purchased with food, which seems to have been rare, or more commonly taken as the spoils of conflict. The upper echelons of Cowlitz male society owned many slaves and had many wives, which were often one and the same. Exactly how these captives fit into Cowlitz society is not clear, but their importance as sources of labor is regularly reaffirmed in Cowlitz lore.\textsuperscript{61}

The Cowlitz’s position on the mouth of the Cowlitz River, an important transportation link between the Columbia River and the Puget Sound, gave the tribe the necessary leverage to oppress others for their own economic gain. Records show that Cowlitz slaves hunted, gathered, and prepared food for the more important families among the tribe. The ownership of slaves indicated wealth and power among the Cowlitz people,


\textsuperscript{61} Adamson, \textit{Folk Tales}, 179; and Irwin, “Cowlitz Indians,” 33-36. Much has been written about the “commodification” of nature, especially in the American West, by historians Richard White, William Cronon, and Donald Worster. The theory goes that capitalism ruined the land because it turned resources into commodities. The implication is that Native Americans had it right, that they respected the land for its direct value to themselves. The Cowlitz case is demonstrative of a group of people that commodified other human beings because of their ability to gather resources from the earth. Evaluating which is worse is not a historical question, but the differences between the two seem to be negligible in the Cowlitz past.
whose migratory lifestyle made the accumulation of accouterments difficult. The Cowlitz
did not make a commodity of animals or trees, but of humans. And although the Cowlitz
Indians were easy on the land, they were less so on weaker peoples.62

As Richard White demonstrated in his history of the Columbia River, work was the
most important link between Pacific Northwest Indians and their land.63 Since
commoners, slaves, and women worked with the land to produce wealth for upper class
men, their connection to the land was more intimate than that of the "kings-people," or
chiefs.64 Their daily lives were so thoroughly connected with their environment that they
developed a respect for and an ability to successfully manipulate the land that served them
well for two hundred years of settlement.

During those two hundred years, the Cowlitz Indians demonstrated the complex
ways that human choices about the environment affect their social and economic lives.
The Cowlitz’s decision to migrate with seasonal changes, for example, allowed them to
live with the land for two centuries without radically transforming it. The effects of
migration, however, were not merely ecological. First, new social and economic ties with
other tribal and kin groups emerged each year, bolstering Cowlitz hegemony at the
confluence of the Columbia and Cowlitz Rivers. Further, constant movement disallowed a
system of wealth based on the accumulation of goods and encouraged the Cowlitz practice
of slavery, which came to symbolize affluence and royalty within the tribe. Finally,

See White, Land Use, Environment, and Social Change; Cronon, Changes in the Land and Nature’s
Metropolis; and Worster, Rivers of Empire.

62 Adamson, Folk Tales, 179; and Irwin, “Cowlitz Indians,” 33-36.
63 White, Organic Machine, 4.
64 This is a translation of a Cowlitz term used to designate royalty. See Adamson, Folk Tales,
migration altered the very demographic makeup of the tribe by threatening the younger and physically weaker members of the society.

Despite centuries of relative harmony with the environment, Cowlitz social and ecological organization eventually laid the foundation for the destruction of nearly the entire tribe. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Cowlitz knew their land, manipulated it successfully, and realized enviable social and biological stability. Yet precisely because of their environmental success, their future would be unpredictably bleak.
"Poor race! Remnant of mighty tribes whom the white man’s diseases...have reduced to a few straggling, begging, reeling, quarreling, and dying groups, with scarcely a trace of their once savage greatness and glory to relieve the sight! How fallen! And how soon to disappear.”

—Timothy Dwight Hunt, 1855

In 1792, the Pacific Northwest witnessed the first contact between whites and Native Americans, an event that would permanently alter Cowlitz life. For centuries European empires had sought the wealth of the Pacific Northwest both for its natural resources and its possible navigation routes. Spain began exploring America’s Pacific coast as early as the sixteenth century, searching for possible sources of wealth to sustain its new western empire. Russia, France, and Great Britain all eventually attempted to find a suitable place to build imperial outposts. “The discovery of this part of the continent of North America,” wrote British Captain James Cook in the 1780s, “where so valuable an article of commerce may be met with cannot be a matter of indifference.”

Two primary considerations drew international powers to the Pacific Northwest, and eventually to the Cowlitz River. First was the possibility that a passage linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans would be discovered. This fabled “Northwest Passage” would have proven so profitable in international commerce that nations exerted every effort to

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find it. The idea of the passage permeated the writings of voyagers from every major power in eighteenth-century Europe, all of whom wanted to cash in on the trade it could generate. Even when Europeans determined the Northwest Passage to be an empty dream, nations still vied for preeminence in the region because of its rich biological resources. Most important among these to eighteenth-century Europeans were beaver and otter pelts. With the world clamoring for fur accessories, the economic potential of the Northwest in general and the lower Columbia River in particular increased the level of European activity in the region.67

By 1792, the United States had joined the Europeans in their search for commercial opportunities in the Northwest. The new nation needed resources with which it would fund its expansion. Captain Robert Gray, a seasoned U.S. navigator, set out to lay claim to the Northwest for the United States of America. In May of that year, he entered the Columbia River and drafted the first map of its lower region. His “discovery,” though establishing no immediate American presence in the area, laid the groundwork for the future U.S. claim to the Pacific Northwest.

Five months later, the Cowlitz Indians saw a white man for the first time. Well-known explorer George Vancouver, after whom many Northwest sites were eventually named, sent Lieutenant William Broughton to explore the inland reaches of the Columbia

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River. Broughton traveled up the Columbia to the present-day site of Longview, where he turned and attempted unsuccessfully to navigate the Cowlitz River.\textsuperscript{68}

There are unfortunately no records of what the Cowlitz Indians thought of this event. Some present-day Cowlitz leaders insist that their forbears were prophetically suspicious of the arriving whites in their land, but no evidence of this view can be documented. Nonetheless, the Cowlitz clearly used the arrival of European and American immigrants to their immediate economic advantage.\textsuperscript{69}

The Cowlitz Indians' skillful manipulation of the environment placed them in a position to gain considerably from the novice invaders. Because they knew where and how to gather food, because they knew how to navigate the Cowlitz River, and because their trade and migration gave them a considerable network of extra-tribal support, the Cowlitz wielded considerable influence with early explorers and eventually with settlers. The arrival of whites did not immediately alter the lives of the Cowlitz Indians, who continued for some time in the economic and environmental organization to which they were accustomed. Movement, trade, bargaining, and limited conflict characterized the Cowlitz Indians' strategy for living with their world and earning a living from it both before and after white settlement.\textsuperscript{70}

In the early stages of contact, the most common economic relationship between the Cowlitz Indians and the newcomers centered on transportation. As noted earlier, the Cowlitz were extremely skillful navigators who knew the rivers of the area well. The

\textsuperscript{68}McClelland, \textit{Cowlitz Corridor}, 6-7.

\textsuperscript{69}Wilson, interview with author.
most common observation about the Cowlitz River during the early nineteenth century was the extreme effort that was required to travel against its current. One of the earliest settlers of the area, Catholic Father S. B. Z. Balduc remarked, "[Passage up the river] would not be difficult if it were not for the rapids. Most of the way it was necessary to use poles and even then one strains greatly to advance a few yards." In the mid-nineteenth century, Protestant missionary Timothy Dwight Hunt referred to the river as "a wild, willow-banked stream," noting the difficulty of his passage upriver.

Yet it was not Hunt that had propelled the craft upstream, but a crew of Cowlitz Indians. The Indians' skill for traversing the treacherous waters gave them secure employment in the early days of intensive white settlement in the Cowlitz River valley. The skill with which the tribe created and maneuvered its canoes was a matter of note among early white settlers of the region. James G. Swan, an astute observer of life in western Washington during the 1850s, praised Cowlitz precision in fashioning their large, wide canoes with implements that seemed to him rather crude. "The broad nose of the [Cowlitz canoe]," he explained, "is to enable the Indian to have a firm footing while he uses his pole to force the canoe over the rapids." "The [Cowlitz] Indians," remembered another early settler, "understood handling the unwieldy boat in the swift water to perfection."

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71 Quoted in McClelland, Cowlitz Corridor, 11.
73 James G. Swan, The Northwest Coast, 34-36.
74 Told by the Pioneers, 78.
Not only did the Cowlitz possess critical navigational skills, but their control of the mouth of the Cowlitz River gave them considerable power during the early days of white settlement. Alexander Ross, a Northwest Company agent and later a Hudson’s Bay Company agent, was charged with communications between Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River and the Puget Sound area to the north. The only passable route between his two posts included the Cowlitz River. He recorded several incidents when white settlers were at the mercy of the Cowlitz Indians both for transportation up the dangerous river and for the mere right of passage. In one case, Ross’s party angered the Cowlitz chief by befriending a rival tribe. In response, the Cowlitz shut down Ross’s fur-getting operations not only in the Cowlitz River valley, but in the Yakima River valley as well. In the process, Ross lost important communication links with the Sound, and operations slowed considerably. Since the number of Indians actually living at the mouth of the Cowlitz was small, it is doubtful that this interchange was a matter of brute force. It seems that the Cowlitz merely refused to ferry Ross and his party upstream and the newcomers were unable to navigate the river alone.

This early contact between American settlers and the Cowlitz Indians was intimately tied to issues of who would control the rough waters of the Cowlitz River. The Cowlitz Indians governed water usage in the valley for the first half century of white settlement. Beginning in 1830, however, a series of catastrophic events severely diminished the Cowlitz voice in determining how the rivers and adjacent lands would be used.

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75 Ross, *Adventures*, 130-134.
The most devastating event occurred from 1830-1832, when the Cowlitz Indians suffered a ruinous epidemic of the “intermittent flu.” Thought by anthropologists to have been a combination of influenza and malaria spread from British fur traders at Fort Vancouver some fifty miles to the southeast, the diseases devastated the Cowlitz. Nearly all of the tribe got sick, and hundreds died, reducing the Cowlitz to a mere fragment of their former population.76

The tragedy of these events is intensified by the probability that Cowlitz environmental practices accelerated the spread of disease and hindered the recovery of infected individuals. Settlers noted that the Indians’ methods of treating the illness, which invariably involved the cold waters of the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers, often made matters worse.77 Their close quarters in their winter homes, most of which were poorly ventilated if at all, would have ensured the infection of relatives who otherwise would have escaped alive. It is also possible that, despite efforts to control Cowlitz sewage practices, their bathing in, drinking from, and cooking with the very waters where infected wastes were eliminated increased contact with the microbes responsible for infection.78

To make matters worse, migrations exacerbated the effects of the epidemic. Because their strategy for dietary survival entailed annual movement, the Cowlitz Indians both spread and contracted the disease through their contact with other tribes and family


77 See Ross Cox, Adventures on the Columbia River, Including the Narrative of a Residence of Six Years on the Western Side of the Rocky Mountains (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1832), I:312-313.

78 For a discussion of these practices, see Chapter 2, pages 20-21.
groups. The carnage spread so thoroughly through the lower Columbia River region, that one settler remarked:

A gentleman told me that only four years ago, as he wandered near what had formerly been a thickly peopled village, he counted no less than sixteen dead, men and women, lying unburied and festering in the sun in front of their habitations. Within the houses all were sick; not one had escaped the contagion; upwards of a hundred individuals, men, women, and children, were writhing in agony on the floors of the houses, with no one to render them any assistance.\(^{79}\)

This devastation was followed by another epidemic, thought to be smallpox, in 1846.\(^{80}\)

Although there were few Cowlitz left as far south as the Columbia River, a handful of families did remain. As Americans arrived to settle the plain at the confluence of the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers, they found the Cowlitz Indians a seriously reduced, weakened, and demoralized people. As the demography of the region changed, so would its geography be transformed forever.

Peter Crawford was among the first white men to arrive at the mouth of the Cowlitz River seeking a permanent home. Like the Cowlitz Indians before him, Crawford brought to the land a set of cultural preconceptions about what land was for and how best to organize a society upon it. In 1847, one year after the second Cowlitz epidemic, Crawford embarked on a journey to find a new home in the Pacific Northwest. As Crawford and his party entered the mouth of the Cowlitz River, they catalogued the various trees and animals they observed. Although they listed the same species named by the Cowlitz Indians—cottonwood, cedar, fir, alder, deer, bear, fish—Crawford’s party envisioned the role of the natural world quite differently. Instead of relatives, they saw

resources, and a land capable of transformation under the human hand. “Ah,” exclaimed Crawford’s friend, “but wouldn’t this grow good corn.”

Crawford eventually settled on a claim directly across the river from what would become Longview in today’s Kelso. His careful surveys of the land, which indicated good soils and ample drainage, enticed his brother to establish his home across the river on the land just north of what became Longview. A little more than a year later, in 1848, a steady flow of American immigrants began arriving to the plain, bringing with them both the motives and the means to remake their environment.

The first American settler to establish a home on the site that is now Longview was Jonathan Burbee, who reached the area from the midwest in the spring of 1848. The large Huntington family followed in waves, beginning in 1849. These newly-arrived families wanted to quickly transform the land they had settled so it would yield what they believed it should: corn, oats, wheat, and potatoes. But “the brush grew as thick as the hair on a dog’s back,” remembered Eugene McCorkle, “and you had to chop and burn to get down to the soil.” This difficult work was slow, and the early harvests produced far less than the families needed to survive.

During the first two or three years of settlement, the Americans relied for their subsistence on the Cowlitz Indians’ knowledge of the land. Despite their weakened

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80 House Committee on Indian Affairs, Cowlitz Tribe, 4-6.
82 Washington Pioneer Project, Told by the Pioneers, 156; also Royal Smith, “Reminiscences of Royal Smith,” Cowlitz County Advocate, 1 January 1896.
84 Eugene McCorkle, “Pioneer Days as Told by an Old Timer,” Cowlitz County Historical Quarterly 2 (February 1961): 15. McCorkle wrote this account of his youth in 1924 or 1925.
condition, the Cowlitz remained the unchallenged experts on the natural resources of the region, and they used this knowledge to gain favor with the much more numerous (and healthier) Americans. The Cowlitz fed the settlers with their fish, berries, and roots in exchange for market goods, most commonly guns and whiskey. These exchanges established a friendly social climate between the two groups, whose children played together while they worked. Even overtly racist pioneer observers remembered those relationships fondly.

After the first winter, however, the newcomers slowly began to learn where to go and how to get the food they needed. In a short time, the Burbees, Huntingtons, Barlows, and others began to understand the richness of the food available to them. To supplement their diet of dried pork and garden greens, these families ate wild strawberries, hazel nuts, gooseberries, salmon, smelt, and seal. They also hunted the deer, elk, and birds that threatened their newly planted crops.

Although it may have seemed for a brief time in the early 1850s that the Americans had learned a new way of living with their natural world, their hunting and gathering were merely stopgap measures to prevent their starvation. Unlike the Cowlitz Indians, these settlers never intended to organize their society around migration. They wanted to build farms, stores, and schools, which would require more permanent settlement than the Cowlitz. They hoped to obviate the need for reliance on untrammeled nature by

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85 Kelly, ed., “T. Dwight Hunt’s 1855 Account,” 150; Told by Pioneers, 78.
86 Congor, Told by the Pioneers 44; Olson, Told by the Pioneers, 156.
87 McCorkle, “Pioneer Days,” 15-16; Olson, Told by the Pioneers, 155; Dykeman, Told by the Pioneers, 112.
producing what they needed through sedentary agriculture. In the process, they eliminated their need for Cowlitz Indians, as well.

By the fall of 1851, the Burbees, Huntingtons, and others had cleared and planted enough land to harvest four to five thousand bushels of wheat. They also began raising a few domesticated animals—mostly chickens and pigs at first—for slaughter. Successful harvests and home-grown meat made the Americans more independent of the Indians, but the Cowlitz still dominated river transportation which the whites needed for bartering wheat for salt and butter at other locations along the Columbia and Cowlitz Rivers. In 1854 Oliff Olson, one of the growing town’s newest settlers, incorporated a steamboat company to ferry travelers and goods between Portland, Oregon and the upper Cowlitz River valley. Soon, steam travel effectively replaced the Indians as the preferred method of river navigation, which virtually eliminated their increasingly minor role in the region’s economy.

Complicating matters for the Cowlitz, 1854 also witnessed the beginning of armed conflict between the Indian tribes of Washington and the territory’s new government. That year, in his first message to the newly-created territory of Washington, Governor Isaac I. Stevens bemoaned the presence of strong bands of Indians and their control over important commercial areas. “The Indian title has not been extinguished,” he complained, “...and the necessity of the promptest action...is obvious to all.” Stevens feared the

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88 Ibid.
89 Smith, “Reminiscences.”
90 Gates, Readings, 139-41.
influence of “large bands of warlike aborigines” on the commerce of the territory because of the sway they held over the region’s waterways.⁹¹

By 1855, war had broken out between many of Washington’s Indians and the new territorial government. Speaking on behalf of Governor Stevens, who was away negotiating treaties with enemy Indian tribes, Charles H. Mason described the chaos riddling Washington Territory:

While peace and security seemed to reign about us, and every person was, as usual, pursuing his customary avocations, an Indian war breaks out in our midst, spreading alarm throughout the whole Territory. Families are murdered, property is destroyed, claims are abandoned for the fort and the blockhouse, and the whole country, instead of portraying the usual peaceful occupations of American citizens, has the appearance of desertion, and nothing but parties of armed men are to be seen in motion.⁹²

The Cowlitz Indians, however, were neither killing families nor destroying property because they had sided with the government of Washington in the hope of gaining the upper hand over traditional tribal foes. At the completion of these wars, Governor Isaac Stevens signed a round of treaties with the beaten Indian tribes. Since the Cowlitz had not fought against the territorial government, they were party to no treaties. Ironically, as the federal government established reservation and assistance policies, they used these treaties to determine the traditional land claims of the tribes. To this day, the federal government has not recognized the Cowlitz as a tribe primarily because they did not participate in this peace process.⁹³

⁹³Wilson, interview with author.
In the wake of this conflict, the Cowlitz suffered yet another year of disease and death in 1857 when smallpox struck their few remaining village sites. A special Cowlitz Indian census two decades later revealed the depth of their tragedy: only sixty-six individuals remained in the entire state of Washington. By the end of the nineteenth century, one Indian agent searched in vain for a distinct group of people he could identify as Cowlitz Indians in southwestern Washington. Some had taken up farming, others had moved onto the Yakima or other reservations, but virtually none remained to shape the land at the mouth of the Cowlitz River. Intensive ecological change would be left to the American community that followed them.94

Monticello residents continued to remake the world they had inherited. No longer would they have to compete with the Cowlitz for hegemony over the resources their environment offered them. Yet the nature of the community they hoped to build placed them in direct competition with wildlife for use of the land, and many of them expressed frustration over their inability to destroy the animals fast enough. There were so many birds, for example, that planting grain was nearly impossible without keeping vigilant watch with a gun in hand. Deer, wildcats, and even bears were said to have wandered the plain in abundance in and around Monticello during the 1860s. Since fully ninety percent of Monticello's residents were farmers, this posed a great concern to the safety of livestock and grains.95

By 1867, the physical appearance of the land previously occupied by the Cowlitz Indians had changed considerably. Instead of a few inconspicuous split cedar homes scattered among the trees and bramble, Monticello boasted a hotel, a grocery store, and a sawmill dispersed among its many farms. Houses built of milled wood dotted the land in a regular pattern, standing at the front and center of their two hundred acre land claims. Farmer diligently worked the land, subduing its vegetation and replacing its wildlife with cows, asses, and pigs.

The settlers' blithe optimism about their dominance over the land faded with the arrival of heavy autumn rains in 1867. With rivers and streams already filled to capacity, an unseasonable December thaw forced massive flooding on the lower Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers. The water was so deep and carried so much force that it decimated the town of Monticello. The courthouse, the hotel, the grocery store, and many homes were destroyed. Fields were washed away, and livestock drowned when they were prevented by fences from running to safety. Bears descended from the hills to feed for weeks on dead pigs and cows.

Since the residents of Monticello had placed so much stock in their own production of food and other necessities, the flood affected them much more than similar floods had affected the Cowlitz Indians. "The destruction of such waters after years of toil," remembered witness Eugene McCorkle, "is hard to stand, and only those who have

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97 1860 census.
98 See note 27.
passed through it can realize the hardships and the heartbreaking labor involved in building up a home again."

Those years of toil had bound McCorkle and the others to the land upon which they lived. The intense labor it took to make the land into a farming town imbued the physical space with the metaphysical qualities of "home." In fact, the law and tradition by which they claimed title to the land reinforced their determination to stay even in the wake of such a disaster. Nineteenth century Americans like McCorkle inherited their conception of land ownership from the English philosopher John Locke, whose writings on property and labor shaped much of that century's land law. Locke taught that untitled lands should be claimed by "improvement" rather than purchase or even historical occupation. "It is the taking any part of what is common," wrote Locke, "and removing it out of the state nature leaves it in, which begins the property....He by his labor does, as it were, enclose it from the common." McCorkle's comments about clearing the plain's dense vegetation, then, constituted his testimony to his family's ownership of the land.

Eugene McCorkle's father, William, gained title to the land at the Cowlitz River in 1853 by petitioning the land office at Oregon City, Oregon under the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850. The law sought to encourage American immigration to the Pacific Northwest by offering 320 acres of free land to any male American citizen who labored to "improve" the land for four years. The McCorkles, by their labor to remake the land, thus

purchased it from the US government. Yet the law failed to recognize the centuries-old involvement of the Cowlitz and other Indians with the land. According to Locke, whose ideas shaped the donation as well as subsequent land acts, “the wild Indian” had no claim to the land simply because he “knows no enclosure.” Thousands of Pacific Northwest Indians were removed from their tribal homes because their visions of the land involved a different set of assumptions about the proper use of natural resources and the proper state of the region’s ecology.

Given this view of the land, it is less surprising that McCorkle and others stayed in Monticello after the flood of 1867. Instead of moving on for more suitable land, their investment stiffened their resolve. George Barlow demonstrated a combination of determination and resignation by developing a flood evacuation routine that would allow his wife and five children to respond to the region’s flooding. His family was to move all valuables to the top floor of their cabin and run to higher ground. There, he constructed a shelter good enough to house them until the flooding had subsided. “It was a well planned evacuation,” remembered Hattie Barlow Olson. “My father timed it to an hour, almost.”

In time, Monticello was rebuilt by Barlow, McCorkle, and others like them. More trees were cleared to build new fences and barns. More hazel brush was burned to create

102 Yolton, Locke Reader, 289.
103 Olson, Told by the Pioneers, 155.
cropland. It was not only the logic of home that fueled their continued labors; market demands and opportunities around the globe motivated the Cowlitz River farmers, as well.

Opportunities to sell food emerged shortly after Monticello’s first crops were harvested. The first market exchanges occurred across the Columbia River with the town of Rainier, Oregon. Monticello settlers went there to obtain salt and flour, both critical to the production of bread, their most common staple.\textsuperscript{104} By the spring of 1852, Monticello began to prosper from its food production. The discovery of gold three years earlier at Sutter’s Mill initiated a flood of immigration that would transform the American West. As people filled northern California they soon outpaced the rate of the area’s food production. Monticello’s potato and onion crops were plentiful in 1852, and the surplus was taken by ship and sold in San Francisco.\textsuperscript{105}

Due to its location on the Pacific Ocean, and its proximity to recently discovered gold, San Francisco became the largest and most important city in the West. From 1849 to 1856, its population grew tenfold, and the city became the trading center for widely dispersed hinterlands. In San Francisco, miners would trade precious metals for food, coming from as far as Nevada to buy produce grown in places like Monticello.\textsuperscript{106} Money, often in the form of gold, would be returned to farmers on the Cowlitz River. Though indirectly, food was linking systems of resource exploitation hundreds of miles away. The

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item \textsuperscript{104}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{105}Washington Pioneer Project, \textit{Told by the Pioneers}, 55; and Smith, “Reminiscences.”
\end{thebibliography}
transformation of creek beds and hillsides in northern California and western Nevada was
fed, in part, by farmer/merchants living on the Cowlitz River.

Monticello’s California trade was short-lived. By the end of the 1860s, the most
important market connections for Monticello merchants and farmers remained in the
Pacific Northwest. Oliff Olson’s fleet of steamboats traded and transported goods along
the Columbia and Cowlitz Rivers, yet the vast majority of the region’s food was produced,
consumed, and exchanged locally. The small-scale of local trade had important social
implications for early Monticello, functioning much as it had for the Cowlitz Indians
before them. Local stores were centers where neighbors brought their surplus to
exchange for the surplus of others. People knew each other’s names, and merchants kept
careful ledgers of who bought what and when. Even in the late 1860s when those
transactions were recorded strictly in dollars and cents, there was still considerable
personal barter for vegetables and grain.¹⁰⁷

In the early 1870s, however, national and international markets became much more
easily accessible to the residents of Monticello and Freeport. In May of 1870, the
Northern Pacific Railroad began construction of its route connecting Portland, Oregon
with the Puget Sound. Beginning just south of Monticello at the port town of Kalama, the
railroad paralleled the Columbia River to its confluence with the Cowlitz. At Kelso, the
rails turned north to follow the Cowlitz River, crossing to the west bank of the river just

¹⁰⁷L. M. McGowan, “An account book from the store of her father Daniel L. Huntington of
Monticello, Washington Territory, 1863-1869,” unpublished original, Cowlitz County Historical Museum.
This ledger, though showing considerable transactions of externally-produced manufactured goods, had
only a few outside food items: all spice, oil, salt, sugar, baking powder, and coffee, none of which was
identified by brand name. Nor was any of them sold frequently or in large quantities. Moreover, the
ledger showed considerable trade for local produce, as well as a large export of locally produced butter.
above Monticello. Although Monticello and Freeport were not directly connected to the rails, their merchants' ability to engage in trade increased exponentially.\(^{108}\)

By the 1880s, the residents of Monticello and Freeport, both in present-day Longview, were connected by their agricultural economy to ecosystems far from their immediate surroundings. Olson and Carner's store, though stocked with local fruit and vegetables, carried a wide array of products transferred from distant regions. "Our stock of staple and fancy groceries," one ad boasted, "was never larger or more complete than at present: Canned Goods, Dried Fruits, Flour and Meal, Teas, Coffees, Spices, and everything that a well supplied grocery store should have."\(^{109}\) Obviously the tea, coffee, and spices were not grown locally. But, surprisingly, neither were many of the baking goods. Unlike previous decades, the 1880s witnessed unprecedented dependence on food sources far from Monticello.

To make a breakfast of biscuits and coffee, for example, required residents of Monticello and Freeport to rely on resources from eastern Oregon, northern Washington, Massachusetts, and Central America. Olson and Carner's carried the standard, pre-packaged flour advertised in the local newspaper, traded or bought from the Portland Market. At Portland, which was becoming a large and important city in those years, Monticello's residents bought flour from Salem and Cascadia, Oregon, and from Seattle, Washington.\(^{110}\) The clearing, fencing, and planting of land in those places was facilitated by market demands hundreds of miles away.


In addition to flour, other baking goods connected Monticello with distant markets. "To make delicious biscuits or wholesome bread," reminded one local advertisement, "use Dwight’s Cow-Brand [baking] Soda...always pure." Or, one might have purchased the popular Arm and Hammer brand. Whatever the choice, the transaction would have involved Cowlitz River residents with an ecosystem more than two thousand miles away, where Church and Dwight Company, Inc. produced baking soda in South Hadley, Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{111}

Market linkages grew even more distant when it came to coffee. Bought in Portland at a low price, Monticello’s coffee was grown in Guatemala, Java, and Costa Rica.\textsuperscript{112} The coffee was bought and transported by merchants like Oliff Olson who had neither been to these places nor invested labor to produce their yields. Instead of creating reciprocal bonds between the producer and the consumer of the food, as local trade had done, such transactions dealt in the abstraction of money.

Despite these growing connections to outlying regions, nineteenth century Monticello and Freeport still produced most of what they needed to survive. The 1890 census shows Monticello producing large amounts of grain, dairy, poultry, and fruit, most of which was consumed locally. The average farmer made less than thirty dollars a year from market exports.\textsuperscript{113} Catlin Brothers’ store in Freeport, for example, carried imported goods, but boasted about its supply of fresh local products. “Farmers having produce to

\textsuperscript{111}Advertisement, \textit{Kelso Weekly Courier} (Kelso, WA), 5 October 1888, 3; and Church & Dwight Company, Incorporated Consumer Relations Department, ‘History of the Arm and Hammer Trademark,” mailed by the company to the author upon request, April 1996.

\textsuperscript{112}“Portland Market,” \textit{Kelso Weekly Courier} (Kelso, WA), 6 December 1889, 1.

\textsuperscript{113}Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, \textit{Eleventh Census of the United States, Agriculture: Washington, Cowlitz County}. 
dispose of," they reminded, "will find it to their advantage to give us a call."⁠¹¹⁴ This process of exchange kept neighbors in constant contact with one another, mitigating the anonymity that comes with a growing population.

Further, even in those cases where merchants imported goods, they seemed aware of their reliance on the ecosystems from which their food came. Weekly market reports were therefore supplemented by descriptions of natural processes at work in distant lands. Since orange trees did not grow in cool, moist western Washington, oranges were imported from California. Aware of this connection, local newspapers printed stories concerned with the health of California's orange groves. When Australian lady bugs were imported to eat orange-killing pests in Southern California during the 1890s, Monticello residents read about it in the local paper.⁠¹¹⁵

Markets connected ecosystems far distant from one another and brought distant pressures to bear on regional environments. The potential for export to northern Washington in the latter part of the nineteenth century, for example, encouraged Cowlitz River residents to alter the river's channel. The first major success came in 1880, when the federal government offered the needed capital and expertise to snag debris from upstream logging operations and dredge the river's lower reaches. Despite the relative ease and economy with which the project was undertaken, it helped broaden the market possibilities for farmers and merchants by allowing them to ship their goods much further upstream.⁠¹¹⁶

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¹¹⁴ Advertisement, "Kelso Weekly Courier (Kelso, WA), 27 December 1889, 2.
¹¹⁵ The Weekly Courier (Kelso, WA), 7 February 1890, 1-2.
¹¹⁶ W. A. Jones, Annual Report upon the Improvement of the Upper and Lower Columbia and Willamette Rivers; of the Snake, Cowlitz, and Yamhill Rivers, Oregon and Washington; and of Lower
Intensive physical manipulation of the river for human needs would not come for many years. No dams were constructed, no irrigation projects were undertaken, and no large-scale dredging occurred. By the end of the nineteenth century, white Americans controlled the waters of the Cowlitz River but used them more for transporting goods among local markets than for anything else. Large-scale fishing activity, hydropower development, and major upstream logging practices would await the advent of the twentieth century.

The residents of Monticello, Freeport, and Catlin had remade the natural world. They had transformed its meaning, its function, and its very physical properties to create the farming and mercantile towns they envisioned as the land’s destiny. By the early twentieth century, the land that had once been crowded with brush, trees, bears, wildcats, wolves, and deer was dominated by wheat, oats, potatoes, cows, horses, chickens, and pigs. More than ten thousand domesticated animals stood on fourteen thousand acres of cleared and planted land. The number of animals living there had changed very little, but the composition of species would have made the place unrecognizable to the land’s previous inhabitants. A few domesticated animals and crops dominated a landscape that before had yielded thousands of vines, ferns, trees, and wildlife. In comparison to the Cowlitz Indians that preceded them, these settlers were unquestionably less gentle on the land. The imprint of their activities was obvious to anyone that visited.


If Monticello’s societal organization was harsh to the land, it was more equitable in its organization of human labor. No slaves and virtually no unpropertied farm workers created wealth for a more powerful “kings-people” as in Cowlitz society. Land holdings at the turn of the twentieth century were admirably equitable, with the towns’ residents almost uniformly owning the land where they lived and worked. Median farm sizes, crop production, and livestock herds were, with very few exceptions, truly the norm. In the 1890s, for example, more than ninety percent of Monticello’s families owned a farm, and only a few very large families like the Huntingtons greatly exceeded the average farm size of 198 acres.118

Yet however equitable, Monticello society was made possible by the death of thousands of Cowlitz Indians and by land laws that annulled any claims of those that survived. Moreover, the distribution of land to American farmers in the 1800s succeeded so thoroughly that no more land was available for the farmers’ children, for non-American settlers, or for newcomers. The only way for parents to bequeath a farm to their children was to divide it, which decreased the agricultural yield per family and increased pressures on the next generation to find new sources of income.

The 1920 federal census indicates that Monticello’s economic and social organization began to break down in the years during and immediately after World War I. As newcomers arrived, there was no land for them to settle, so they were unable to continue the pattern of economic activity established by the area’s first white settlers. More “laborers” appeared in the occupation census than ever before, and the census takers

118Same, as well as 1920 pop. census.
discovered several boarding houses filled mostly with single male workers. The most concrete indicator of change was found in the lives of Monticello’s young men. In previous census reports, they had almost all been employed on their fathers’ farms, but in 1920 a great many were employed as laborers in some form of industry away from home, most commonly logging or fishing. Even if the older generation hoped to continue with the established economic pattern, that option seemed infeasible for the young.\footnote{1920 pop. census.}

Another important change occurred that hampered the success of Monticello’s agrarian social organization. At the end of World War I, the international markets to which Monticello had become connected began offering a far lower price for Washington’s agricultural products than in previous years. This meant much lower returns on farmers’ investments than they were used to. In response, some of the area’s long-time residents began looking to sell their lands to acquire capital for other business ventures.\footnote{Schwantes, Pacific Northwest, 364-65; State of Washington Department of Agriculture, Sixth Biennial Report of the Department of Agriculture to the Governor, Sept. 30, 1922, to Sept. 30, 1924 (Olympia, WA: Frank M. Lamborn, Public Printer, 1924).}

In the seventy years spanned by Monticello’s inception and decline, the physical nature of the land at the confluence of the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers had changed dramatically. This transformation, and the ironic decline of the society that effected it, attracted to Monticello one of the nation’s wealthiest men. Robert A. Long, chairman and owner of the Long-Bell Lumber Company, came to the town in 1921 with a vision of remaking the land yet again. To accomplish his utopian dream, he intended to purchase
Monticello in its entirety and build in its place one of the nation’s finest industrial cities:
Longview, Washington.
CHAPTER 4
VIVID DAYDREAMS OF A CITY

In the beginnings of this enterprise, even before a building had been erected, I used to drive out over a rough trail on those foothills...I could see the wide vacant expanse from Mt. Solo to the Cowlitz. As I stood there, I confess to vivid day dreams of a city: a beautiful city teeming with life and industry, a city filled with happy people, a city of handsome buildings...All of us day dream but how often they fail of reality! I thank God today that I have been privileged to see...a large part of those day dreams come true.

—Robert A. Long, Founder of Longview, 1928

In 1922, historian and urban theorist Lewis Mumford published a study of utopian ideas and experiments in the western world. His *Story of Utopias* discussed the relative merit and success of visionary urban models from Plato’s *Republic* to more modern entities like Greeley, Colorado. He aimed to discover trends in the success and failure of model communities that would inform contemporary urban planners and lead to the betterment of urban conditions.\(^\text{122}\)

Mumford argued in the book that history knew only two kinds of visionary experiments: utopias of escape and utopias of reconstruction. “In one we build impossible castles in the air,” he wrote. “In the other we consult a surveyor and an architect and a mason.”\(^\text{123}\)

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\(^\text{122}\) Lewis Mumford, *The Story of Utopias* (1922; Reprint, New York: Peter Smith, 1941).

\(^\text{123}\) Mumford, *Utopias*, 15.
successful city planning, then, lay in the extent to which the visionaries remade the physical environment to conform to the ideological one. The key was to build “a reconstructed environment which is better adapted to the nature and aims of the human beings who dwell within it than the actual one.”

Robert Alexander Long, Mumford’s contemporary, could not have agreed more. When Long arrived at Monticello, Washington in 1921, he began a plan to rebuild its every element in the image of his urban ideal.

Robert A. Long was the founder and chief executive of the Long-Bell Lumber Company of Kansas City, Missouri. In 1875, Long incorporated a small retail lumber yard in Columbus, Kansas, which grew quickly until he could no longer run the business alone. As new employees joined the company, Long expanded his retail operations throughout Missouri and eastern Kansas. Eventually, he decided to eliminate the costs of buying lumber from timber companies by harvesting the forests himself.

Long’s company began its logging operations with small purchases of Choctaw Indian forest land. As logging proved to be very lucrative, Long expanded his holdings by acquiring nearly half a million acres of yellow pine forest in Louisiana. For two decades, Long’s assets grew exponentially as he converted trees into lumber, until the end of the 1910s when he boasted a personal portfolio of more than twenty million dollars. By 1919, the Long-Bell Lumber Company operated 130 retail lumber yards and eleven mills, scattered mostly across the South in Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. By the

early 1920s, Long-Bell posted more than thirty million dollars a year in lumber profits.126

With more than eight thousand employed and the capital and assets to expand, Long-Bell
appeared to be on sound financial footing.127

In 1919, however, the company faced a crisis: it was running out of trees. Long­
Bell’s financial success had precipitated a rapid exhaustion of its southern timber holdings,
leaving the company’s executives unsure of how to proceed. Many hoped to liquidate the
corporation’s seventy-five million dollars in assets and retire comfortably. Others sought
new opportunities in more remote forests. At a crucial board meeting held at Long-Bell
headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, Robert A. Long announced his intention to begin
anew in the Pacific Northwest. He was especially familiar with the rich forests of Oregon
and Washington, which he ordered to be surveyed for purchase. Near the site of the forest
land Long-Bell acquired, Long suggested building a modern sawmill that would dwarf the
company’s present efforts. Although there was apparently some disagreement, the board
adopted Long’s plan and the Long-Bell Lumber Company began searching for an
appropriate headquarters for its western operations.128

For three years surveyors combed the Pacific Northwest for the ideal site, criteria
for which included proximity to private forests, access to railroads, international shipping
ports, and a large, flat tract of easily developed land. Planners exulted when they
discovered the moribund towns of Monticello, Freeport, and Catlin. One of the planners,

126New York Times, 12 December 1923, 34.
127Peter Clark Macfarlane, “A Sawmill in Heaven: Lumber King Long’s Dream of Paradise and
How He Tries to Realize It on Earth at Seventy,” Sunset Magazine, June 1924, 8-10.
128Macfarlane, “A Sawmill in Heaven,” 8-10, 56; The Longview Company, The City Practical
that Vision Built (Longview, WA: The Longview Company, 1923), 4; Kellogg, “They’re Building a City
B. L. Lambuth, compared the creation of Long-Bell’s new town to the painting of a beautiful picture. “Nature prepared the canvas,” he wrote, “a vast plain lying at the confluence of two rivers and rimmed with fir-clad hills.”

The idea that nature prepared the land for the development of an industrial city claimed a large following among the city’s boosters. Virtually every promotional tract touted the region’s natural suitability for urban development. “Nature ordained a great city should be at Longview,” began one list of the city’s advantages. Yet the inventory of Longview’s “natural” benefits indicates just how enmeshed previous human settlements had become with the natural world. It also speaks to the views of the city’s founders, who believed “nature” to include much more than ecology without humans. Proponents listed—with no distinction between human and non-human creations—rivers, railroads, mountains, forests, orchards, fish, wheat fields, and cows. To them, the ecosystem as they found it in 1920 was the natural order of the land at the mouth of the Cowlitz River. There was no use talking of bears and underbrush, for neither existed on the land they surveyed. One aspiring poet wrote of Longview, “Covered wagon days are over, and the timber wolf has bid adieu, to make place for this city fate has chose to name Longview.”

The land as transformed by the builders of Monticello in the nineteenth century became the nature of the twentieth. Railroads, built to connect markets to natural

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129 Longview Company, City Practical, 4-6; B. L. Lambuth, “A Small City Whose Growth is Aided by a Plan,” The American City Magazine, August 1926, 186.
resources and manufacturing, were viewed by Longview’s founders as part of the natural order of the land. The plain itself, once a dense thicket of shrubbery and trees, seemed “a wide vacant expanse” to Robert A. Long as he viewed it from a nearby hillside. In the absence of Monticello’s efforts, the intense labor required to remove vegetation would have proved a deterrent to Long-Bell scouts, who saw the farmers’ defoliation of the land as one of the site’s “peculiar topographical advantages for city planning.”

For Longview’s founders, the word “nature” embraced anything that influenced the environment in which their city would be built. They included any process that affected the region’s topography, natural resource base, or biology in their assessment of the region’s natural advantages because they understood that the land no longer could be considered without these processes. The streets, lawns, and trees of their city would become part of that nature, too, because they believed urban development to be the logical—or in their words “nature ordained”—progression of the region’s environment.

As engineers and surveyors discussed the merits of the Monticello site, Robert A. Long began to expand his thinking about the new town. Given the large number of public facilities that were necessary to furnish the needs of Long-Bell’s workers, Long decided that he should promote the city to investors in hopes of defraying construction and maintenance costs. This meant that the new city, instead of becoming a company town tied exclusively to the success of the Long-Bell mills, would be a diversified community. The notion thrilled Long. In the following months, he developed his vision for an ideal, modern community. “I am interested in trees,” he said during that time, “but I think I am

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more interested in people. I want to see them have good homes, permanent employment, and living environments that will make them happier and better citizens.\textsuperscript{132}

Long placed great faith in the ability of city planners to accomplish these goals. Although planned communities were certainly not new to the United States, professional city planners in the 1910s were breaking new ground and gaining unprecedented acceptance. City planning was an important element of the larger progressive movement, which began in the 1890s as a reaction against the economic and social inequities of modern urban industrialism. Though not monolithic, progressivism sought to accomplish two basic objectives. First, it hoped to equalize the distribution of power within governments as well as corporations. Second, it wanted to improve social conditions in America's growing urban centers. Progressives dominated the city planning community, especially in the 1910s. They believed urban crime, unemployment, and immorality to be organic outgrowths of urban geography.\textsuperscript{133}

One of the most outspoken members of the urban planning community in the early 1920s was Lewis Mumford. His study of utopian movements, cited above, argued that there were two crucial elements to any successful urban plan: a unified ideology and a detailed, well-engineered city plan.

Although no evidence indicates that Robert A. Long personally read Mumford's work, it is clear that he and his planning team were familiar with Mumford's ideas. The ideology and engineering of Longview became Long's central concerns as plans were

\textsuperscript{132} "The Vision of Longview," \textit{American Forests} 35 (February 1929): 70.
established to build a new town for his company's mills.\footnote{Mumford, \textit{Utopias}, 267; Long, "Address."} Long and his supporters agreed with Mumford's assertion that all the planning in the world would fail in the absence of a unifying mythology—or "idola," as Mumford called it.\footnote{Mumford, \textit{Utopias}, 297-98.} Early in the venture, one of Long's closest comrades warned, "If at this time we allow our homes, our schools, our church and our city to fall into the hands of persons who possess only a little horizon, the inevitable degeneration is bound to come."\footnote{E. H. Gebert, "Weekly Sermon," \textit{Longview Daily News}, 16 October 1923.} Nature, they argued, must be completely remade to reflect the purpose for which the city was envisioned. Longview must be "planned from the ground up" to avoid the problems plaguing other urban areas as they struggled to adapt to the modern world.\footnote{Longview Company, \textit{The City Practical}, 4-5.}

The unifying ideology behind the city of Longview, intended to bind its citizenry together in pride and purpose, can be stated in a single word: progress. The city's modernity was repeatedly cited as its greatest quality. Time and again Long and his hired planners hailed Longview as a "progressive city," whose streets, sewers, and electricity attested to its superiority above other Northwest towns. "Industry is the salvation of the human race," wrote J. W. Martin. "It has been the ladder or stairway by which men have climbed from the primitive to families, clans, communities, villages, cities, nations and governments." Long-Bell's "new industrial city," stood at the zenith of civilization.\footnote{The Longview Company, \textit{City Practical}, 4-10; Undated promotional brochures, at Cowlitz County Historical Museum, Kelso, WA; J. W. Martin, "Industry and its Demand," \textit{The Log of Long-Bell} 8 (January 1926): 7.}
The ideal of progress was to lift all of Longview's citizens by providing them with the tools for social, economic, and religious advancement. "America is a land in which no one need complain that he is the victim of circumstances which he cannot control," wrote one contemporary in summary of Robert A. Long's beliefs. He intended to make Longview into the quintessential American city where "strong men rise from the ranks because they have conquered and utilized circumstances." 139

To promote the ideals that animated Longview, Robert A. Long and his compatriots at the Long-Bell Company organized an astoundingly large and comprehensive publicity campaign. In 1923, Long-Bell incorporated the Longview Company, whose main purpose was boosting the city's image and growth. The company hired a team of professional advertisers to work day and night to convince people to invest in or move to Longview. In the first two years of its existence, The Longview Company spent $350,000 in addition to all of Long-Bell's efforts under different auspices. In fifty of the nation's largest newspapers, it placed half page ads describing the advantages of Longview's detailed city plan. The Saturday Evening Post carried literally dozens of advertisements, many of which occupied entire pages. Literary Digest and American Magazine also printed ads for Longview in 1923 and 1924. In addition, during Longview's first two years of construction, The Longview Company mailed more than 35,000 pieces of promotional literature all across the country. 140

140 The Longview Company, City Practical; idem., Wonder City; idem., undated and untitled promotional literature, at Cowlitz County Historical Museum, Kelso, Washington; Leith F. Abbott to Philippa Sherman, 29 May 1925, Cowlitz County Historical Museum, Kelso, Washington.

Although his brochures touted Longview as a city that vision built, Leith Abbott, The Longview Company’s western advertising chief, claimed that it was really “the city that publicity built.”143 If Long-Bell’s own publications are to be trusted, the message was received rather well. Prominent Americans seemed fascinated by the experiment, which exemplified the progressive idealism that shaped business and politics in the 1910s and 1920s. Long-Bell published letters, interviews, and statements from the nation’s commercial and civic leaders who had visited or read about Longview. Each noticed different things about the city, but all of them mentioned the vital connection between the natural world and the development of the urban landscape. Ralph Budd, president of the Great Northern Railway Company, wrote in 1926:

The natural beauty of its location is enhanced by the careful, expert city planning and by the modern construction of its streets, parks, homes, and other buildings. As a result, Longview, in the incredible space of four years, has become one of America’s most attractive cities. The rare combination of topographical, climatic, industrial, and cultural advantages make it an ideal place in which to live and work.144

141 Ibid.
142 “The City Marvelous! Longview, Washington, Proves that Dreams Do Come True; Beauty and Utility Combined in this Ideal Community,” Great Northern Semaphore, September 1928, 3-8.
143 Abbott, letter to Sherman.
Longview’s progressive ideology required the control and development of the natural world to human ends, but it also praised its own ability to guide that development in aesthetically pleasing ways.

Possibly the greatest example of Longview’s dedication to the gospel of progress came at the city’s first anniversary celebration. In the summer of 1924, the city’s boosters commenced a four-day festival to enhance civic pride and to encourage investment. They called it the “Pageant of Progress.” Parades, concerts, competitions, luncheons, and other events commemorated Longview’s creation by bringing thousands of new residents together with potential investors and new neighbors.

The Pageant of Progress began with a large parade, which formed at the city’s center and moved through the business district until it reached Long-Bell’s new manufacturing plants. At the completion of the parade, the Long-Bell Lumber Company dedicated one of the largest lumber plants in the world. There followed logging competitions, radio shows, dancing, and finally fireworks. For three additional days, the festivities continued. United States senators and World War I heroes took to the stage to promote the progressive triumph of Longview. Washington’s governor, Louis Hart, spoke proudly of Longview as one of the most prodigious developments in his state.145

If there were detractors from the cause that united Longview in those early days, they went unheeded. The popularity of the ideal city, whether justified or not, rested in the belief that the power of human progress could ameliorate all human discontent. “If there are any faithless persons in Longview who jeer and scoff at progress,” counseled
Pastor E. H. Gebert of the Longview Community Church, “remember that the faith of men will yet bring us rising towers and a municipality of which all will be proud.”

Yet to transform a hundred farms into a single metropolis required more than faith. In order for Long and his planners to create their new city without hindrance, they first had to obtain “single unobstructed ownership” of the entire flood plain at the mouth of the Cowlitz River. When Long-Bell came to Monticello in 1921, it brought millions of dollars to convince farmers to sell their land for the construction of Longview. As mentioned earlier, Monticello’s families were already in the process of shifting from sole reliance on farming to labor and manufacturing in the fishing and timber industries. The conditions were right for Long-Bell to encourage that transition with cash.

The first to sell his farm to the Long-Bell Lumber Company was Wallace Huntington, whose family had been one of the very first to settle in the valley during the nineteenth century. In February of 1921 when he sold his land, Huntington was in his mid-fifties and lived on a large farm with his wife, Annie, two children, and a son-in-law. Their income was slim, and though he had been born and reared in Monticello, he must have decided that he could do better with cash than with the land he was becoming too old to work.

Others followed, but it was not until mid-1922 that Long-Bell began to see consistent success in acquiring the desired land. By June of that year, the company was

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147 Longview Company, City Practical, 5.
purchasing hundreds of acres a week. In all, Robert A. Long supervised the acquisition of more than fourteen thousand acres of land, and Long-Bell eventually gained free title to the entire plain that six hundred people had called home only two years before.  

With sole ownership of the land, the Long-Bell Lumber Company was free to organize a city plan that could embrace every element of urban living. “The city was destined to be exceptional from its very beginning,” raved one early booster, “because it was completely planned before a single building operation took place.” The planning was done by a team of urban designers whom Long knew from Kansas City. Jesse C. Nichols, the team’s most prominent member, had designed a suburban country club district in Kansas City, which gave him national acclaim. His ideas, communicated after a visit to the site in 1922, shaped the city’s broad physical outlines more than any one else’s. George Kessler, who had designed Kansas City’s public park system, contributed important knowledge on the civic value of carefully planned public space. Hare and Hare, an urban design consulting firm, was hired to work closely with Nichols and Kessler. S. Herbert Hare’s study of ten other growing cities brought valuable information to the team.

In August of 1922, construction of Longview began with the paving of its first street. Unlike many of the nation’s older cities, Longview was built for the automobile. Its planners specifically studied the causes of traffic congestion in other cities and designed

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149 “Cowlitz County Deed Book;” The Longview Company, City Practical, 2-14; Lambuth, “Small City,” 186-89.
151 For the best summary of Longview’s planning and development from the perspective of urban planning, see the work of Carl Abbot, Professor of Urban Studies and Planning at Portland State
wide, carefully-placed streets to obviate the problem in Longview. Even before a single building project had commenced, wide roads criss-crossed the empty cityscape.\textsuperscript{152}

Longview’s planners did not approve construction of a single permanent building until the city’s entire network of streets was planned and begun. They organized the central portion of the city in the shape of a wagon wheel, with streets radiating from the six-acre civic center at its hub. The majority of streets they placed in a right-angle grid overlaying the wheel, which gave Longview’s early maps the appearance of being drawn on graph paper. At the very center of the grid in the six-acre civic center, construction began on the first permanent building of Longview in October of 1922.\textsuperscript{153}

That building was the Hotel Monticello. The hotel stood at the physical center of Longview, but it represented the ideological center, as well. Intentionally chosen as the first construction project in the entire city, the Hotel Monticello symbolized the image the new city wanted to portray for itself, rising quickly and beautifully from the mud. Ten months later when the building was dedicated, Robert A. Long and his planners proclaimed the relationship they hoped to establish between Longview, its natural environment, and its history.\textsuperscript{154}

Robert A. Long commissioned Joseph Knowles to create a series of paintings for the lobby of the Hotel Monticello. Knowles, a national celebrity only a few years previous, had recently moved to western Washington to paint images of the Pacific Ocean.
It was not painting, however, for which he was acclaimed. In 1913, the world watched Joe Knowles as he stepped naked into a Maine wilderness. He had boasted of his ability to conquer the forces of nature, and carrying nothing with him, he commenced a two-month experiment of his mettle. Boston bustled with talk of Knowles’s exploits: killing a bear, making fire with sticks, and finding food enough to sustain him for the duration of his experiment. When he emerged from the woods, Knowles became an instant celebrity, speaking to large and exuberant crowds and selling nearly a third of a million books. Few men have enjoyed as many apppellations, among which were “modern primitive man,” “original nature man,” and “modern cave man.” More importantly, however, Knowles symbolized a growing American dissatisfaction with urban life that found its expression in a movement to preserve wilderness recreation.155

Knowles spoke and wrote enthusiastically about the need for progressive Americans to flee the congestion and corruption of their cities and find respite in the wild. Reminiscent of Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis, Knowles’s philosophy relied on the assumption that American character, and the liberties needed to create it, were forged in the struggle of men against the forces of nature. Echoing the romantic writings of Henry David Thoreau, Knowles proposed the establishment of wilderness colonies that would return an overcivilized nation to the principles that made it great. “Simply because

154Lambuth, “Small City,” 186-88; The Longview Company, Wonder City; and Tennant, Salutation, 21.
155Environmental historian Roderick Nash discusses Joseph Knowles at length in his seminal Wilderness and the American Mind, 141-60. For primary sources, see the Boston Post, 17 August 1913; the Boston Evening Transcript, 9 October 1913; the Boston American, 2 December 1913. See also Joseph Knowles, Alone in the Wilderness (Cambridge, MA: University Press, 1913); and Virgil Elizabeth Hopkins, “Joseph Knowles,” Cowlitz Historical Quarterly 33 (Number 4, 1991): 3-40.
we are a civilized people,” he proclaimed, “does not mean that the days of wilderness colonization are over.”

Knowles’s acclaim was short-lived, however. Failing to sustain a following, he ended up in an obscure seaside village in western Washington painting the ocean. His disdain for city life remained deep, but when approached by Long-Bell emissaries for the Hotel Monticello job, he accepted. Knowles must have understood the irony of his situation. Long a vocal adversary of urban development, he found himself commissioned to promote a new industrial city. Knowles’s own work exposed the inconsistency of his wilderness romanticism. If it was the process of conquering nature that made America great, and if that process was to be encouraged to foster virility and stature among the country’s men, the end product was not only quality citizens, but copious cities.

Consistent with Long’s gospel of progress, Knowles entitled his Hotel Monticello collection “Conquerors of the Trail.” The set of forty-two paintings, which adorned half a dozen walls, depicted four stages of progress in the region’s development. “In oil,” stated one Long-Bell publication, “[Knowles] has told the story of the winning of the Pacific Northwest. He has shown in thrilling detail how the pioneers came by land and water, their reception by the Indians, their struggles against nature.”

The adversary in the struggle, depicted in the most murals, was nature in its pre-human condition: wild, untrammled, and forbidding. Next came the Indians, who blended seamlessly with the wolves and rivers painted around them. Then, as the name of the collection implies, came the conquerors of the trail: explorers, fur traders, and farmers.

156 Nash, Wilderness, 142-49.
Finally, and most triumphantly, came the city. “It is fitting,” wrote a Long-Bell employee, “that Longview should be chosen in which to hang these pictures which write the record of the West. In herself she typifies the development which has gone on simultaneously throughout this country. Longview is the youngest city in the Pacific Northwest and is designed to be the most modern. Yet, its history goes back a long way.”

The history of the land on which Longview was created was thus depicted as the setting for an inexorable march toward modernity, urbanization, and capitalistic enterprise. The last thing Long-Bell executives wanted people to believe was that their city was novel; they hoped, instead, to create a deep sense of permanence. By appropriating the history of several millennia, Longview’s boosters obscured the youth of their enterprise. In the process, they reinforced their cultural visions of progress by depicting only one course along which the relationship between humans and the rest of nature could travel. That trajectory brought people to the city. In the incongruous logic of Longview, the unyielding advance of the city conquered, recreated, and cooperated with the natural world.

The dedication ceremonies for the Hotel Monticello underscored this irony. Consistent with the boosting of Longview in general, participants in these events demonstrated the depth of the connection between the city and the natural environment. Nature had “provided the location,” as well as “an unusual wealth of resources and beauty,” they said. Yet the location had been prepared for the city by Indians and

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157 “Do You Remember Joe Knowles?” *The Log of Long-Bell* 7 (September 1925): 2.
158 Ibid., 6.
159 “The Vision of Longview,” 70.
farmers as much as anything else, and the land’s resources were often transformed into products that would make no sense without cities.

Longview’s establishment required its founders to remake the natural world in the image of the vision that animated it. This meant millions of dollars of land purchases, years of planning, and intense promotional efforts. It meant replacing farms, cows, and pigs with streets, sewers, and parks. Lewis Mumford characterized utopias of reconstruction as having two primary features: a unified ideology and a carefully planned restructuring of the natural world. In 1928, Robert A. Long proclaimed his experiment a success, largely because Longview was progressing both ideologically and physically according to plan. His efforts to remake the world at the mouth of the Cowlitz River had dramatically altered the land, water, and animal life to make them “better adapted to the nature and aims”\(^{161}\) of the city he had dreamed. As Long was well aware, this reordering had profound effects on the city’s social organization, as well.

\(^{161}\)See Mumford, *Utopias*, 21.
CHAPTER 5

THE NATURE OF THE CITY

“What a change man has wrought. Where buckskin clad axemen once blazed a trail to the river bank or through the mighty forest now rise giant mills converting to man’s use giant trees brought from far off forests—and a model city. Where willows and alders hid landing places of home-made canoes and bateaus, now loom modern docks.”

—The Longview Daily News, 22 July 1926

Robert A. Long left nothing in his new city to chance. Every element of the environment within and around Longview’s city limits was engineered to create opportunities for the fulfillment of his community ideals. By reordering nature, he hoped, he could encourage and even force Longview’s citizens to become what he believed they ought to be. In this process of remaking the natural world, Long and his associates effected three important changes. First, they altered the biological and topographical world to create a new ecological order on the flood plain. Second, they made Longview into a nexus wherein the ecologies of far distant regions interacted in very real ways. Finally—and this was their goal—they established social, political, and economic relationships among Longview’s citizens that outlived any of the city’s founders.

During the 1920s, Longview’s development permanently altered the ecology of the Cowlitz-Columbia flood plain, both aesthetically and functionally. Most obviously, the land looked different. “A skyline is coming into being,” explained the local newspaper in
1923, "where ten months ago were trees." Building proceeded rapidly. During Longview's first three years of development, construction crews completed more than a hundred miles of streets, sixty-eight miles of concrete sidewalks, 1,650 homes, two banks, fourteen apartment complexes, six hotels, fifty-five commercial buildings, a lumber plant, a power plant, two schools, and a library.

During these years, observers witnessed first hand the "gigantic transformation" taking place on the land. Concrete workers, eager to meet Long's tight deadlines, encircled fields with sidewalks while farmers harvested their final crops. Livestock literally stepped aside to make way for the new city. Fully four thousand construction workers lived in tents and temporary huts as they built Longview from fields and swampland.

By the spring of 1928, only five and a half years after construction began, Longview bloomed with thousands of flowers that were new to the flood plain. Orderly streets replaced haphazard mud trails. Yet, however drastic, these changes did not represent the obliteration of nature. All of the natural processes that occurred before the advent of an industrial city remained: photosynthesis, animal reproduction, water drainage and evaporation, death, and decay. With more than ten thousand people, plus an abundance of songbirds, squirrels, fish, dogs, cats, and insects, the biological density of the

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162 Quoted in "Pioneers Revisit Historic 'Monticello,'" *Cowlitz County Historical Quarterly* 1 (February 1960), 10.
164 Lambuth, 186-91; untitled promotional tract, Longview Company, Cowlitz County Historical Museum, Kelso, Washington.
165 Kellogg, "They're Building a City," 24.
land was not greatly diminished.\textsuperscript{167} There was nature in the city, however different it may have appeared from willows and thickets.

The development of Longview, far from removing the land from natural processes, actually created a series of connections between previously discrete ecosystems. Since the arrival of American farmers in the nineteenth century, the land at the mouth of the Cowlitz River had not functioned within a narrowly-defined ecosystem. Market pressures from mining operations in California and Nevada, for instance, had affected the flood plain by encouraging farmers to increase crop production, thereby intensifying their transformation of the land they inhabited. In Longview, urbanization and industrialization took these connections to another level.\textsuperscript{168}

As Longview’s builders replaced farms with urban infrastructure, they eliminated the productive capacity of the farms while increasing the region’s demand for food and other natural resources. An important aspect of Long-Bell’s plan for the new city was that its westernmost section, Columbia Valley Gardens, be reserved for the production of fresh produce, and a farmers’ market operated in Longview where cattle, chickens, pigs, eggs, and produce were sold for local consumption.\textsuperscript{169} But with the opening of the Longview Grocery Company on 13 September 1923, the pace of change away from local food sources accelerated rapidly. By 1930, Longview boasted fifteen full-service grocery stores and nine restaurants, whose combined annual revenues exceeded one million

\textsuperscript{167} The Longview Company, \textit{Wonder City}; photograph collection, Longview Room.
\textsuperscript{168} See Cronon, \textit{Natures Metropolis}; chapter 2.
\textsuperscript{169} Longview Chamber of Commerce Papers, Box 1, Cowlitz County Historical Museum, Kelso, Washington.
dollars. On the other hand, Columbia Valley Gardens, containing a mere six farms, harvesting a total of one hundred sixty acres and keeping less than three hundred more for pasture. On the shelves of the grocery stores sat products from natural communities thousands of miles away. As Longview’s population grew, reaching fifteen thousand by 1928, its demand on distant environments increased.

In addition to replacing farms and orchards with modern business districts, Long-Bell and other manufacturers built industrial plants on the margins of the city near the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers. To allow settlement on this marshy and flood-prone land, Long-Bell invested millions of dollars in an elaborate dyking and pumping system that ran for miles along the two rivers. The project became so expensive that Long-Bell was forced to offer municipal bonds to the public, advertising heavily in the *New York Times* with promises of healthy returns. The settlement of these lands displaced waterfowl, especially herons, ducks, and geese.

Like Longview itself, Long-Bell (and by 1926 Weyerhaeuser) mills established links among distant ecosystems. The forests of western Washington could no longer remain distinct from the land at the Columbia-Cowlitz intersection. The Long-Bell Company, to supply the needs of its customers in and around Longview, managed forests for maximum productivity. They had purchased enormous tracts of land from

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Weyerhaeuser and the state of Washington, mostly in the Lewis River valley to the immediate northeast of Longview. Once their mills were up and running, Long-Bell foresters exerted every effort to make their forests function with the predictable efficiency of the mills themselves. 175

"Trees," noted the editor of the journal *American Forests* in 1929, "...are the pillars upon which the economic permanence of the great undertaking rests...[So] just as the company called in the best city planners to lay out the city, so it called in the best foresters to plan its forestry operations." 176 Long and others in his company realized that their new city would be doomed without intensive extraction of timber from the forests. To promote success, Long-Bell foresters adopted a comprehensive plan to attempt to manage their forest ecosystems with an iron hand. The only thing preventing "absolute control over species and spacing" of trees was cost. Insofar as they were able, Long-Bell foresters fed their mills by clear cutting large stands of trees and replanting the cut over lands by hand. Fire was suppressed. Undesirable species—meaning those unfit for lumber or paper—were eliminated altogether. 177

The mills at Longview served as connecting points between the forest ecosystem and the flood plain. Human activities in one place affected the long-term viability of the other because both were organized around the success of the timber industry. Without a steady flow of raw logs, Longview stood no chance of survival. Yet the intensive control

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176 "Vision of Longview," 70.
of forests demanded by the timber industry’s hunger for profits actually undermined the stability of the ecosystem.

Even the “best foresters” of the 1920s misunderstood the dangers of intensive forest management. Although the Forest Service had three stated objectives—to improve and protect the forest, to secure favorable water flow conditions, and to provide a continuous timber supply—its so emphasized commercial activities that forest protection, watershed enhancement, and other economically inefficient activities rarely took precedence. W. B. Greeley, Chief of the U. S. Forest Service in 1925, argued that the first two goals “are not ends in themselves. They are rather means of attaining the more fundamental object of providing a continuous supply of timber.” As a result, whenever faced with a choice between economic efficiency and ecological protection, Greeley and his colleagues chose the former.

If the Forest Service emphasized profits to the detriment of ecological health, private landowners like Long-Bell and Weyerhaeuser, who had no accountability to the public for their forest practices, focused exclusively on short-term profits. Northwest lumber executives openly opposed any efforts to extend the Forest Service’s preservation and watershed goals to private forest lands. Long-Bell’s efforts, aimed at maximizing timber output, ignored the long-term viability of the forests on which their new city depended.

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179 Much has been written about the Forest Service and its management of western forests. The two that most clearly demonstrate this point, however, are Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995); and Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*. 
To complicate matters, Longview developed quickly into a strong international port for lumber and raw log exports. Longview shipped its forest products to Japan, China, England, New Zealand, Australia, as well as the eastern United States. Demand for timber in these regions affected the development of Longview itself by providing jobs and capital with which more homes were built and more land reorganized. Market demand also encouraged intensified control of the forests to get from them the highest possible yield. A good illustration of the connections between distinct ecosystems occurred in 1924. That year, Japan suffered a devastating earthquake. The resultant need to rebuild homes and other infrastructure created an instant demand for more American wood products. Long-Bell, completing its first Longview plant that year, attempted to capitalize on the demand by expanding international shipments. The new industrial city of Longview stood at the center of a process that linked southwestern Washington forests with urbanization on the Columbia River and natural disasters an ocean away.\(^\text{181}\)

When Robert A. Long decided to create a model city, he knew that it would mean a reordering of the natural world. Although he may not have anticipated the effects of his move on other regions, it is clear that he comprehended its significance in the public and private lives of everyone who would live in Longview. The aim of Longview’s planners was to create a city that would need no wilderness outlet for aesthetic recreation. Seasoned by his experience in Kansas City, George Kessler influenced the formation of Longview’s public space by developing an integrated parks and recreation system.


“Beauty in Longview,” the planners boasted, “is not isolated to some remote and aloof spot, but is a part of the daily life of its citizens.”

The attempt to weave nature into the fabric of the city addressed a growing complaint about urban life that it lacked the beauty and tranquillity necessary for human happiness. Men and women like Joseph Knowles, whose paintings decorated the Hotel Monticello, complained about the lack of nature in the nation’s cities and clamored for wilderness preserves to compensate for this shortcoming. The earliest coherent discussion of wilderness as a national policy was written by Aldo Leopold, whom many consider to be the father of modern wilderness ideology. His 1921 article, “The Wilderness and its Place in Forest Recreation Policy,” expressed the growing dissatisfaction with urban life so common in the mid-1920s. Longview’s planners intended to create a city whose residents could enjoy natural beauties without ever leaving the city limits.

Unlike wilderness—which drew people away from overcrowded city life—Longview’s parks and recreation system existed to create an urban gathering place. Moreover, Longview’s planners could not accept the land as it was handed to them. They spent millions of dollars to sculpt parks from the sloughs and fields so that Longview’s residents could enjoy engineered rather than wild recreation.

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182 The Longview Company, *Wonder City*.
The most dramatic of these efforts was the creation of Lake Sacajawea. At the southwestern corner of Longview’s central business and residential districts, a disorderly slough snaked the land for nearly half a mile. During the rainy months, the slough would fill to overflowing, but during the summer it sat stagnant and shallow. Before the creation of Longview, the Fowlers, a Monticello farming family, watered their animals and washed their dishes there. Trees along its banks grew irregularly, and rarely stood upright because of the soggy soil. Although Hare, Kessler, and Nichols found the Fowlers’ slough unsightly, they also recognized its potential for public recreation. They eventually developed the site into Longview’s most celebrated public park.

Creating a lake and a park from an unpredictable slough was no small task. For months, motorized bulldozers, horse-drawn graters, and men with shovels and rakes labored at the slough to smooth its contours and eradicate its irregular vegetation. Pipes that drained surrounding lands were directed at the slough to provide it with ample water year round, and drainage was established to prevent flooding during the winter. New grass, trees, flowers, swans, and foot bridges placed the final touches on the park as it was completed. Though its creators named it after Lewis and Clark’s Indian guide during their epic trek through the Northwest, Lake Sacajawea was anything but historical. Its appearance and even its ecology were the creation of twentieth century urban planners.

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185 The choice to name the lake after Sacajawea, and not a Cowlitz Indian, underscores how little Long and his planning team valued the local Natives. Like the paintings in the Hotel Monticello, it also demonstrates their desire to create an artificial past linking Longview with the development and civilization of the “wild west.”

186 Photograph collection, Longview Room; Longview Company, Wonder City; Lambuth, “Small City,” 186-88.

187 Ibid.
Long and his planning team claimed that Lake Sacajawea and all of Longview’s parks would be public in the best sense of the word: of and for the people. Rather than restrict recreational activities to those who could afford vacationing, Long wanted to ensure that both his workers and executives had ample space to relax and contemplate. Yet public space, especially thoroughly planned space, has rarely succeeded at fulfilling its democratic goals. Urban planning arose in part out of a suspicion of common landowners. Their inability to design adequate living conditions demanded that more educated and scientific planners do it for them. Urban designers were not only distrustful of landowners, but outwardly sought to control their decisions to ensure that land was ordered according to modern ideals. Longview’s planners realized and accepted this. They envisioned the city as a place where upper-class refinement would be encouraged and working-class revelry discouraged by the very physical environment they created.

During the early years of Longview’s development, the Longview Company published dozens of photographs of Lake Sacajawea. They showed nicely dressed women with broad, white hats, stooping to feed graceful swans. They showed well dressed men smoking pipes and looking philosophical. They showed young, clean children at play. Yet never in all of their brochures did they show anything but upper-class white families. No construction workers. No loggers. No black or Chinese laborers. Even though these groups were not physically prevented from participating in the activities of Longview’s

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189 See chapter 4, notes 18-20.
public space, their role there was intentionally obscured to promote a certain ideal for Longview’s new and potential citizens.¹⁹⁰

One element of Long’s gospel of progress was a belief that outdoor recreation should be refined and contemplative. In the United States, this belief had its roots in the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Since at least that time, class tension over appropriate recreation centered on the perception of the appropriate use, and even the very nature, of the environment.¹⁹¹ Long’s romanticism is clear in a description of Lake Sacajawea published in 1928: “All the long golden summer afternoons, the trees in Lake Sacajawea Park stand on tiptoe to admire their reflections in the quiet water.” Promotional literature described swans, “serene in their white grace,” swimming betwixt “feathery cottonwoods.”¹⁹²

Long-Bell workers and other laborers, on the other hand, viewed nature as a place to test and demonstrate prowess and skill. Little of the 1924 Pageant of Progress held the interest of the working class. One event, however, drew literally thousands of construction and lumber workers to Lake Sacajawea. Hailed as a “lumberjack carnival,” the Longview “Rolleo” pitted lumbermen against one another in demonstrations of skill and strength against nature. Pete Hooper, a Long-Bell logger, gained the favor and admiration of his peers when he stayed atop a floating log longer than any other worker.¹⁹³ Although Long and his compatriots did nothing to stop or discourage the contest, their

¹⁹²The Longview Company, Wonder City.
statements about the goals and intentions of Longview’s public space clearly attested to their belief that quiet contemplation was more refined and elevated than raucous competition.

If Longview’s outdoor space was subtly scripted by class bias, its civic facilities were more overtly controlled. Company-built towns in the United States had a history of inequitable social conditions. Because company executives ran the government, controlled the police, and provided residents with their only means of employment, they wielded considerable power. But Robert A. Long hoped to break with this tradition. His was to be no company town, “small and ramshackle and sordid.” Rather, he aggressively courted outside businesses and incorporated an independent company to control real estate ventures. Aware of the recent bloody labor dispute in nearby Centralia, Washington, Long hoped to create the conditions for harmony and good will.\textsuperscript{194}

Victoria Freeman, one of Longview’s earliest residents, was dubious. Freeman came to Longview in 1923 when her husband, James, got a job constructing trunk railroad lines for Long-Bell. Victoria, James, and two boys, Oliver and Calvin, initially lived in an automobile park on Longview’s east side. They were one of the only black families to arrive with Long-Bell, and they doubted the rhetoric of equal opportunity. When Victoria attempted to enroll her sons in Longview’s only school, she was rebuffed because Long-

\textsuperscript{193}“A Lumberjack Carnival,” \textit{The Log of Long-Bell} 11 (September 1929): 2-3.
Bell company executives had instructed the school office to block the enrollment of all non-white children.\textsuperscript{195}

The school, ostensibly public, actually functioned as an arm of Long-Bell, whose executives were overtly racist. One Long-Bell attorney, however, sympathized with Freeman and told her to try again. After a confrontational entrance with her son, Oliver, she was told by the third grade teacher that there were no available seats, though she could see empty desks all around the classroom. She persisted. Oliver sat down, and the teacher went to the principal's office to have him removed. Eventually, the principal sent the teacher back to the classroom with instructions to continue teaching.\textsuperscript{196} Thereafter, school officials allowed the Freeman boys and a handful of other non-white children to attend Longview's public schools.

This small victory permanently changed the nature of Longview's schools, but it could not change the nature of Longview. Even more scripted than the city's public space, which still allowed citizens some latitude, was Longview's private space. As Long and his planners reordered the landscape, they imposed restrictions on the types of activities that could occur and where. While boosters claimed that Longview would be the quintessential American city, "with equal opportunity for all who seek to locate there," the physical realities of life on the ground belied the equality of Long's gospel of progress. Long-Bell executives had hoped to reorder the land in the image of their progressive dream, but as Lewis Mumford predicted for such efforts, the project was fraught with


\textsuperscript{196}Ibid.
problems because the actual environment was not structured in harmony with the ideological one.\textsuperscript{197}

Behind Longview’s intensive zoning restrictions lay the laudable goal of orderly urban development. It was to escape the bane of haphazard growth through “scientific” planning “in accordance with the best and latest ideals in civic development.”\textsuperscript{198} The use of zoning ordinances originated with progressive urban planners in the 1910s, and the first city to employ restrictive suburban zoning was New York City in 1916.\textsuperscript{199} Longview’s planners zealously adopted this “latest ideal” in city planning. As a result, they boasted that “Longview will never know the spectacle of a laundry adjoining a residence or a garage adjoining an apartment house.”\textsuperscript{200}

Neither would it know the spectacle of a worker adjoining an executive or a black family adjoining a white family. Although Long-Bell divested itself of much of the property it purchased from 1922-1924, it did so on its own terms. One of the most important and distinctive aspects of Longview’s design was its division into discrete districts, each with stringent restrictions on what could be done and who could live there. By controlling physical space in this way, Longview’s planners solidified class and race divisions and undermined the democratic unity they professed. As Thomas Edison noted of Long’s generation, they were “trying to run a new civilization in old ways.”\textsuperscript{201}

\textsuperscript{197}The Longview Company, \textit{City Practical}, 5; Mumford, \textit{Utopias}, 267-69.
\textsuperscript{198}Robert A. Long, quoted in “Coming of Long-Bell Is Momentous.”
\textsuperscript{200}Kellogg, “They’re Building a City to Order,” 26; “Coming of Long-Bell Is Momentous;” and The Longview Company, \textit{City Practical}, 10.
\textsuperscript{201}Thomas Edison to Henry Ford, quoted in Mary Beth Norton, David M. Katzman, Paul D. Escott, Howard P. Chudacoff, Thomas G. Patterson, William M. Tuttle, Jr., and William J. Brophy, \textit{A
Long-Bell workers initially lived in tents and makeshift hovels while they built the factories, infrastructure, and homes of the new city. While company executives stayed in comfortable hotel rooms, working-class families lived in tents for up to two years while their fathers built their bosses’ homes. Housing in Longview was arranged strictly. Neighborhoods were first arranged around the cost of the homes within them. J. C. Nichols, who had planned Kansas City’s famed country club district, arranged the most costly neighborhoods where Long-Bell officials would reside. Unsurprisingly, these were the neighborhoods first to receive running water, indoor plumbing, and electrical wiring. They were also the first built. No logger or mill worker could afford these neighborhoods’ minimum property costs, which is exactly how Long-Bell’s owners wanted it.202

Before his death, George Kessler helped design two neighborhoods for the city’s laborers. One early observer stood atop the Hotel Monticello to inspect Longview’s construction. Looking down on these two developments, he observed that “half a mile or more away is what resembles a vast cantonment,” or temporary military housing unit. He later learned that what he saw was a permanent neighborhood planned for Long-Bell workers. The area’s resemblance to military barracks may not have been a coincidence. Both Kessler and Nichols had been employed by the US government during World War I to design cantonments for America’s troops.203


202See note 195.
203Kellogg, “They’re Building a City to Order,” 24-26.
Working-class families lived in small "cottages" closer to their industrial workplaces than executives. These families were far less likely to own cars than Long-Bell management, so their location nearer the mills was convenient. For those who could not or chose not to walk, a small fleet of busses ran from the neighborhood to the mills. With the noise and odors from sawmills and paper factories, however, proximity seems less a blessing than a banishment. Moreover, the democratic ideals that permeated the promotion of Longview were undermined by Long-Bell’s control of the land. Class distinctions that already existed were formalized on the plats and deeds of the city.

If Longview’s white workers were strongly discouraged from living near upper-class executives, people of color were expressly forbidden. The beautiful lots by the lake were not to be sold to black, Chinese, or Japanese families even in the unlikely event that they could make enough money to afford one. “Ownership by anyone other than white race prohibited,” began one section in Longview’s restrictions and covenants. The only exception was made for live-in “domestic servants,” in the employ of a white home owner.204 As a selling point for the city, The Longview Company reassured potential property owners that in Longview “buyers of property are protected against undesirable encroachment.”205 Victoria Freeman, among others, was not even allowed to rent property in or adjoining the neighborhoods where any white citizens resided. Planners demarcated exactly where every non-white resident would live. East of Longview’s civic center near the fairgrounds, black residents were allowed to own or rent homes. South of

205 The Longview Company, City Practical, 4.
that neighborhood near the railroad lines, Asian laborers lived mostly in trailers and small shacks.\textsuperscript{206} In 1930, when thousands of houses had been built in Longview, there was not a single non-white person who owned a home.\textsuperscript{207}

Longview’s architectural and infrastructural modernity escaped the racial hinterlands, which stood only a mile or two from the city’s center. The ecological order established for the city did not operate in Freeman’s neighborhood. She and her family lived without paved roads, running water, or indoor sewage pipes for nearly twenty-five years after the rest of the city received them. In some ways, this meant that non-white families operated within a different ecological framework than their white counterparts.\textsuperscript{208}

Sewer mains, electrical wiring, and paved roads, although not “natural” in the traditional sense of the word, still played an important role in the region’s complex ecological equation. As ecologist Nancy Langston has demonstrated, every alteration of the land changes the environment as a whole in ways that cannot be measured or predicted.\textsuperscript{209} Paved roads, for example, block precipitation from absorbing into the groundwater supply and increase the pace of runoff. Sewage pipes export waste products that otherwise would have sat in close proximity to well-water supplies. Although it is impossible to measure how, non-white families were excluded from the new urban ecology of created in Longview. Theirs was a separate ecological system, which reinforced the separate social systems already in place.

\textsuperscript{206}Lambuth, “Small City,” 187-88; “Coming of Long-Bell Is Momentous.” See also note 30.
\textsuperscript{207}1930 Housing census.
\textsuperscript{209}Langston, \textit{Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares}. 
For these families, environmental differences fundamentally affected their daily lives. Noise, smells, cold baths, and out-houses created for them a geography that underscored their exclusion from the modern Longview. Victoria Freeman spent the better part of three decades campaigning for the right to be included in the progressive plan of the city. Not until the 1950s did she succeed in obtaining the funding for public facilities in black communities. For Freeman, environmental and social issues were two sides of the same coin. She eventually garnered enough support for her neighborhood to put in sewers, pave its roads, and build a park, all of which were supposed to characterize the benefits of Longview from its inception.2\textsuperscript{10}

By the end of the 1920s, Longview’s physical creation began to slow considerably. With the stock market crash in 1929 and the ensuing economic depression, neither Long-Bell nor its workers had the money to expand the city. Long-Bell, Weyerhaeuser, and other industrial employers all curtailed shifts and put off plans for expansion. Business did not stop, and Longview did fairly well relative to other timber communities, but the excitement and extravagant spending that characterized Longview’s first seven years had ended. In the early 1930s, residential building all but stopped. In 1935, Robert A. Long died at the age of eighty-four. The nature of Longview would thereafter change incrementally and without overarching utopian motivations.2\textsuperscript{11}


\textsuperscript{211}“Mill Center,” Tacoma (WA) News Tribune, 22 April 1932; Richard Bloomer, “Longview Grows from Farm Area to City Within 9 Years,” LA Times, 22 August 1931, 18; “As the West Mounts to Supremacy,” Sunday Oregon Journal, 24 April 1932; Bradley, Robert Alexander Long.
The development of Longview required its planners to reorder the entire plain at the mouth of the Cowlitz River. In the process of creating a model city, Robert A. Long imposed his ideals on the land and shaped its appearance and ecology. He also organized public and private space in such a way that ensured the continuation of class and race divisions. If there is anything to be learned from Long’s experiment, it is that environment and human society cannot be separated. Even in a modern industrial city, perhaps especially there, the physical organization of land and the extraction of natural resources shapes society as much as it does the environment.

At the dedication of Longview in 1923, Robert A. Long boldly predicted that “within twenty-five years or less this place called Longview is going to be one of the five outstanding cities of the United States.” It did not happen. At least part of the reason for this failure lies in the fact that although Long ostensibly understood the interaction between environment and society, he did nothing to ensure that his ideals matched the environment he created. He spoke of equality, democracy, and modernity, but he delivered inequity and control. The main reason for this discrepancy lay in Long’s own double-mindedness. While he genuinely wished for everyone to live by his upper-class mores, he also believed that some people simply were not fit to do so. Lewis Mumford argued that without harmony between utopian dreams and environmental realities, no utopian experiment could succeed. Longview demonstrates as well as any effort in history that he was right.

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212 “Longview To Be One of Six Big Cities of West,” Longview Daily News, 13 July 1923.
CHAPTER 6  
CONCLUSION

"On the Washington banks of the mighty Columbia River, fifty miles from its entrance into the Pacific Ocean, there is today a scene of intense, organized activity as the brains and brawn of men create out of a broad expanse of valley land a modern American industrial and home city. Without doubt, this is a city-building project without parallel in the whole American history."

—Longview Promotional Brochure, c. 1924

Longview’s development may have been intense and organized as its boosters claimed, but it was not unparalleled. Earlier settlements at the mouth of the Cowlitz River, although neither urban nor industrial, anticipated Robert A. Long’s attempt to reorder the natural world as a means to creating an ideal community. On the same land with the same natural resources, the American farmers and American Indians that preceded Long demonstrated the complex interplay among environment, economy, and society that characterized Longview’s development. The early part of the twentieth century also witnessed the creation of many industrial cities whose planning and vision resembled Longview’s. Each of these experiments demonstrated that, however we rank their relative value, environmental, economic, and social concerns are inseparable.

The land at the confluence of the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers took its original form under the pressures of ice, rock, water, and volcanic mud. Over time, however,

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humans came to the land with visions of how it should appear and what it should do for them. The Cowlitz Indians, American farmers, and urban industrialists that lived there each altered the topography and biological composition of the land in response to their cultural attitudes and physical needs. The resulting landscapes looked very different.

After two hundred years of Cowlitz settlement, the land sustained an irregular patchwork of bushes, trees, ferns, and vines which clustered around the plain’s streams and sloughs. Grassy clearings, intentionally created by Cowlitz fires, drew deer, elk, and other animals there in great abundance.

After a tragic series of epidemics struck the Cowlitz Indians, American farmers came to the plain with new ideas for how it should appear. Because of their belief that land should be cleared, fenced, and domesticated, they transformed a densely vegetated flood plain into a flat and orderly set of farms and lawns. Where there had been deer, elk, bears, and wolves, the farmers had cows, donkeys, pigs, and horses. Trees, vines, and bushes gave way to wheat, oats, and potatoes. By the beginning of the twentieth century, a mere fifty years after Johnathan Burbee harvested his first potato crop, the land boasted thousands of acres of grains and pastures.

These changes in the land made the site attractive to members of the Long-Bell Lumber Company who were looking to establish a new timber settlement in the Pacific Northwest. The farmers’ efforts to clear the land of its original vegetation would allow Long-Bell to establish the new city of Longview with much less effort than with an uncleared area. The building of Longview again changed the land’s appearance and ecological functions. Roads, sidewalks, and houses altered groundwater filtration. New
species of trees, flowers, and birds changed the biological composition of the plain. Factories and cars changed the smells in the air.

As each of the three societies altered their environment, they also entrenched their social and economic patterns. The more that the Cowlitz Indians migrated, for example, the more social ties they established among distant tribes. These connections continuously increased the incentive to migrate, which, as we have seen, had important ecological implications. The environmental attitudes that led to Cowlitz hunting and gathering would have been reinforced over time as their skill and success with that method of sustenance increased.

For Monticello’s farmers, clearing, fencing, and planting the land reduced their opportunities for non-farm economic endeavors such as hunting or fur trading as wildlife retreated from their fenced and heavily guarded lands. The farmers transformed the land because they believed that they should, and that transformation entrenched the social patterns that inspired it. After the flood of 1867, for example, Monticello settlers had invested so much in reshaping the environment to particular economic and social ends that their only two options were to rebuild their farms or give up. Eventually, when farming could no longer sustain them, Monticello’s residents found their alternatives so thoroughly connected with their remade land that the only way to adapt was to sell the land and move away.

As Long-Bell restructured the land for the second time in a century, it strengthened the class and race divisions found in its executives’ previous urban experiences. Restrictive land ownership, inequitable distribution of public infrastructure,
and controlled public space all contributed to the existing barriers between workers and executives, whites and non-whites. As Richard White has noted, "spatial arrangements... reveal the social relationships that helped produce them."\(^{214}\) At least for Longview, spatial arrangements did more than reveal the racist and elitist attitudes of the city’s founders, but actually enforced and entrenched them. Because the races were physically segregated on the ground, they developed separate churches, playgrounds, and neighborhood affiliations. Since workers’ very landscape was different from their bosses’, feelings of separation and even suspicion grew stronger.

The introduction of national market economics in the mid-nineteenth century changed the way people at Longview used the environment and connected Longview’s small flood plain to ecological systems hundreds and even thousands of miles away. The market also changed the meaning of the environment and its resources. As a cash economy replaced bartering, goods were traded more anonymously, which weakened the social connections between people and the land on which they lived. They could shop with crowds of neighbors and yet never establish the reciprocal relationships implied by direct trade. Moreover, they could buy and eat food that bore no connection to their labor with the environment.

Especially with the arrival of industrial Longview, the plain grew into a nexus wherein the ecological processes of distant regions converged. Cowlitz Indians brought meat and berries from upstream and traded for Columbia and Cowlitz River fish, but little else. This limited the influence of human activity on ecological systems physically distant

from each other, and kept changes in one system from influencing change in another. Monticello’s farmers began trading agricultural goods very soon after their arrival there, but their connections to distant markets remained moderate. Few farmers made much money from trade, even in the early years of the twentieth century. When Long and his supporters came to the Cowlitz River, however, they chose the site for Longview specifically because of its potential to link distant markets. Longview’s very survival depended on the degree to which Long-Bell and other timber companies could extract the resources of one region and sell them into another. This increased the rate of environmental change both within and without the city.

Equally as important as the environmental effects of economic change were the social consequences. For the Cowlitz Indians, migration encouraged not only kin relationships but also slavery and intertribal conflict. Movement weakened the very young among them, yet it provided those that survived with strength and, in the end, power over their enemies.

Monticello farmers established a strong and economically equitable community, but only for a brief time. Their land-holding practices ensured that very few generations could pass without a considerable revision in societal organization. Although those that owned farms were economically quite equal, newcomers and outsiders were excluded and even somewhat feared because they did not possess the virtue of land ownership. Eventually, the entire community of six hundred plus people chose to sell their land because their economic and environmental attitudes had ensured the brevity of their success.
The parallels between Longview and its predecessors are many. In spite of technological or ideological differences, the core intent of the Cowlitz Indians and Monticello farmers was the same as that of Robert A. Long: to manipulate the natural world to create a society that reflected their social and economic preferences. All of them found that altering the environment shaped their social patterns and vice versa. They each experienced a host of unintended consequences, as well. The Cowlitz Indians did not likely want to increase infant mortality or intertribal conflict; Monticello farmers did not intend to alienate themselves from their neighbors or diminish their children’s economic opportunities. But the choice about how to live with the environment—how to use or profit from natural resources—turned out to be as much a social decision as an economic or ecological one.

Professional urban designers recognized the connections among the social, economic, and environmental worlds of a community. Writers like Lewis Mumford emphasized the importance of acknowledging this interaction, and claimed that it was the goal of the planning profession to design cities accordingly. Early in the twentieth century, in response to the growing currency of Mumford’s ideals, planners produced hundreds of city projects that resembled Longview in their engineering of the environment. As the city planning profession developed into a national force during the 1910s, it became an article of faith that careful alteration of the physical landscape would produce corresponding changes in the social and economic lives of those who lived there.215 Torrance, California, a suburb of Los Angeles, anticipated some of Longview’s failures

several years before Long and his compatriots developed their plan. Boosters proclaimed Torrance the solution to everything from economic insecurity to the social unrest caused by dissatisfied workers. But by 1922, only one year before the dedication of Longview, Torrance had failed to achieve its objective to become an ideal “modern industrial city” in spite of the tremendous optimism and careful planning that attended its creation.\textsuperscript{216}

Robert A. Long hoped to avoid the failures of other communities by creating a carefully planned utopian city. He believed that environment and society were inseparably connected, so he spent millions of dollars and the final years of his life trying to remake the natural world in the image of his dream. His wonder city was to become one with the wonderland that surrounded and pervaded it. By the time of his death, however, his city was struggling amid a financial depression, and its landscape and ecology were reinforcing the barriers that divided the new community. Long’s dream did not fail for lack of engineering or lack of public investment. It did not fail because he was wrong about the environment shaping society and vice versa. It failed because he was right. Longview’s planners engineered the land with racial divisions, and they got them. They arranged their city’s geography according to class, and they developed a society that reproduced deeply embedded class divisions. They praised the smokestack and got smoke.

Longview’s boosters claimed that the “Wonder City in a Wonderland” was an experiment unmatched in American history. They could not have been more wrong. Longview’s development typified city planning in the 1910s and 1920s, only one among

hundreds of planned communities across the nation. Even in the 1920s—the city’s best years—Longview’s racial inequity, class divisions, and industrial pollution placed it squarely into the mainstream of its contemporaries. Longview’s history is important not because it is unique, but because it is ordinary. It demonstrates one of the most universal lessons to be found in the history of American community building: that our environment, our economy, and our society are inseparable.

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Longview, Washington, is located in Cowlitz County, at the confluence of the Columbia River and the Cowlitz River, 50 miles from the Pacific Ocean, 50 miles northwest of Portland, and 133 miles south of Seattle.

Taken from The Longview Company, *The City Practical that Vision Built* (Longview, WA: The Longview Company, 1923), 2.